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CO 28 - P.1 TO P.49

NETAJI INQUIRY COMMITTEE  
REPORT, 1956

[NETAJI RESEARCH BUREAU, CALCUTTA]

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NETAJI INQUIRY COMMITTEE  
REPORT, 1956

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## NETAJI RESEARCH BUREAU

AN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
NETAJI BHAWAN • CALCUTTA

### A note on the air crash on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1945

Taipei has a very special place in the heart of Indians. One of the greatest freedom fighters of India Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose breathed his last at Taipei on August 18, 1945. He had raised the Liberation Army of India and established a provisional government of free India in Singapore and Rangoon during the second world war. After the surrender of Japan on 15th August 1945 Netaji left Singapore. On the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> August he along with his Deputy Chief of Staff Habib-ur-Rehman boarded a Type 97-2 (modified) bomber at Saigon. The plane was going to Tokyo via Dairen. On 18<sup>th</sup> August the plane arrived at Taipei early in the afternoon. After refueling and rechecking of engines the plane took off. But within minutes of take off the plane crashed at Taipei Airport. Netaji was seriously injured and taken to the South Gate (Nanmon) Hospital which is now known as <sup>Heping</sup> University Hospital, Taipei. But Netaji succumbed to his injuries and died later that night. His mortal remains were cremated at the Taipei Crematorium. At the time of his death Dr. Yoshimi who had treated him, Mr. Nakamura, the interpreter, Habib-ur-Rehman and some other Japanese officials were present. His last remains and ashes were kept at the Nishi Honganji Temple which still exists. There was a funeral ceremony in the Temple.

Here is the report of the Enquiry commission set up by the Government of India in 1956. Netaji Research Bureau first approached Taiwan Government way back in 1965. Dr. Sisir Bose then Director of Netaji Research Bureau visited Taipei. He met Foreign Office Officials Mr. Sih Shou-heng and also Mr. Huang Chao-chin who had been the Chinese Consul General of Calcutta from 1939-1942 and knew the Bose family. The then Foreign Minister Mr. T.M. Wei was also apprised of the matter.

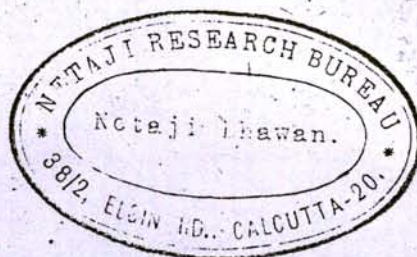
The Taiwan Government had said on earlier occasions that since they took charge of the country much later, they do not know much about the incident though they had heard about it. Most of the information supplied to the commission was by the Japanese Government. There were newspaper reports recently in India that Taiwan has said that there was no such air crash. Is this true? If so, on what basis was it said? The comment created a lot of confusion. We would appreciate any information that can be supplied about the great tragedy that befell India's great hero on the soil of Taiwan. Hope the cultural and economic ties between Taiwan and India will remain strong as ever.

38/2, Lala Lajpat Rai Road, Calcutta - 700 020

Telephone : 2475-6139/2455-9467, Fax : 91-33-24745070, Telegrams : Suvasbos, Calcutta

e-mail : nrb@cal.vsnl.net.in • website : <http://www.netaji.org>





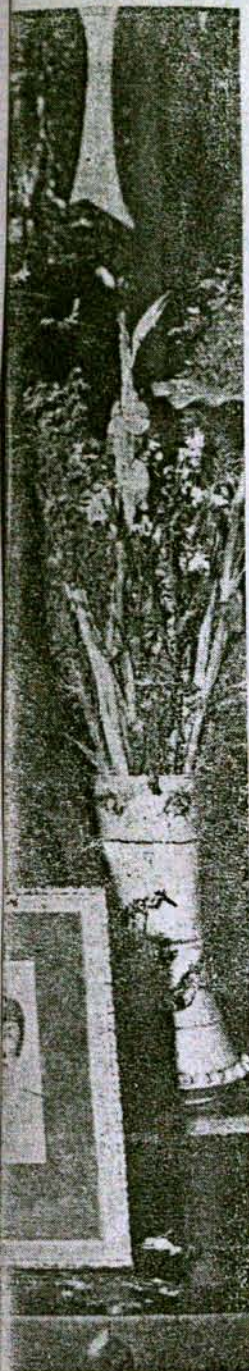
NETAJI  
INQUIRY COMMITTEE  
REPORT



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

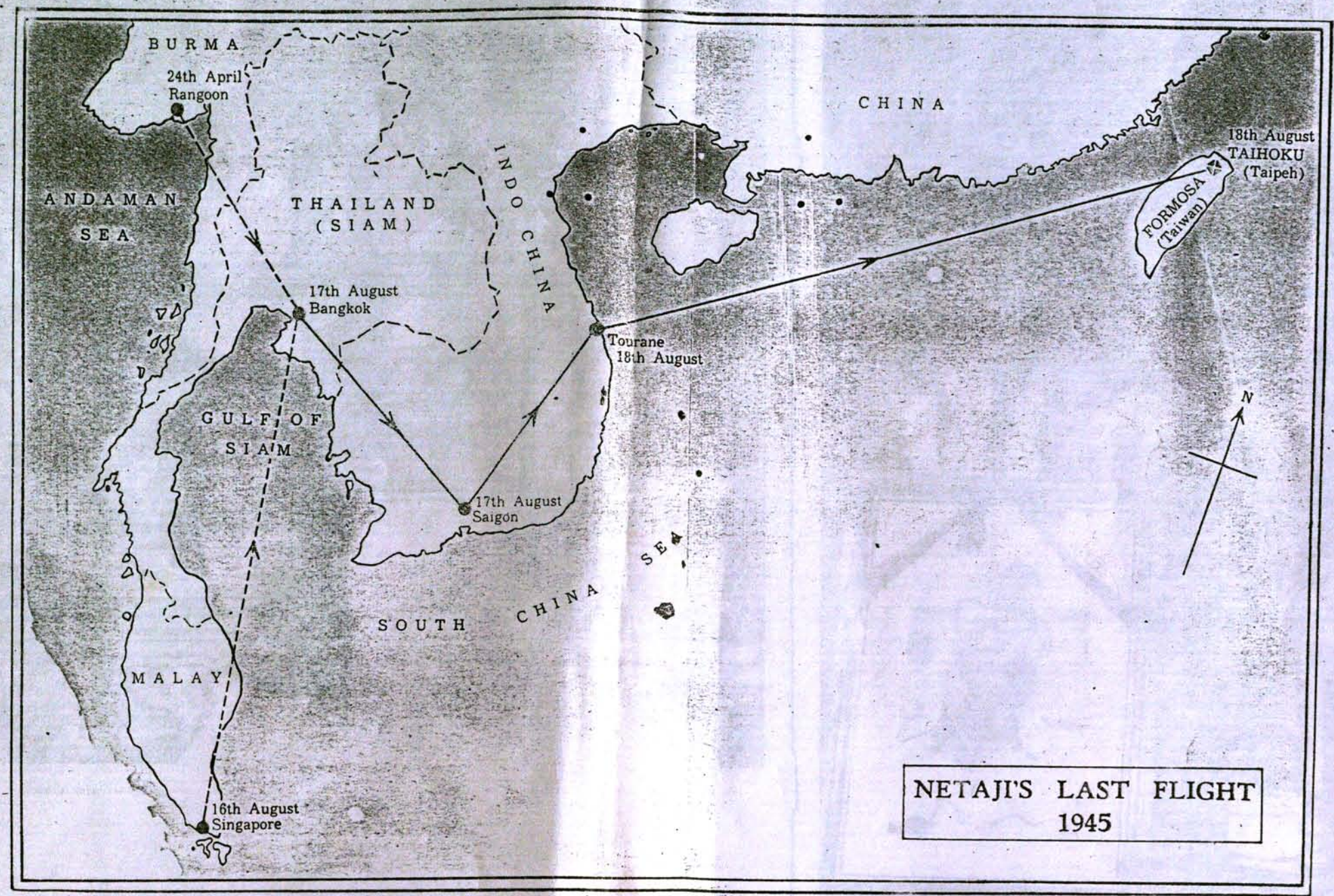
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s—Inner Casket

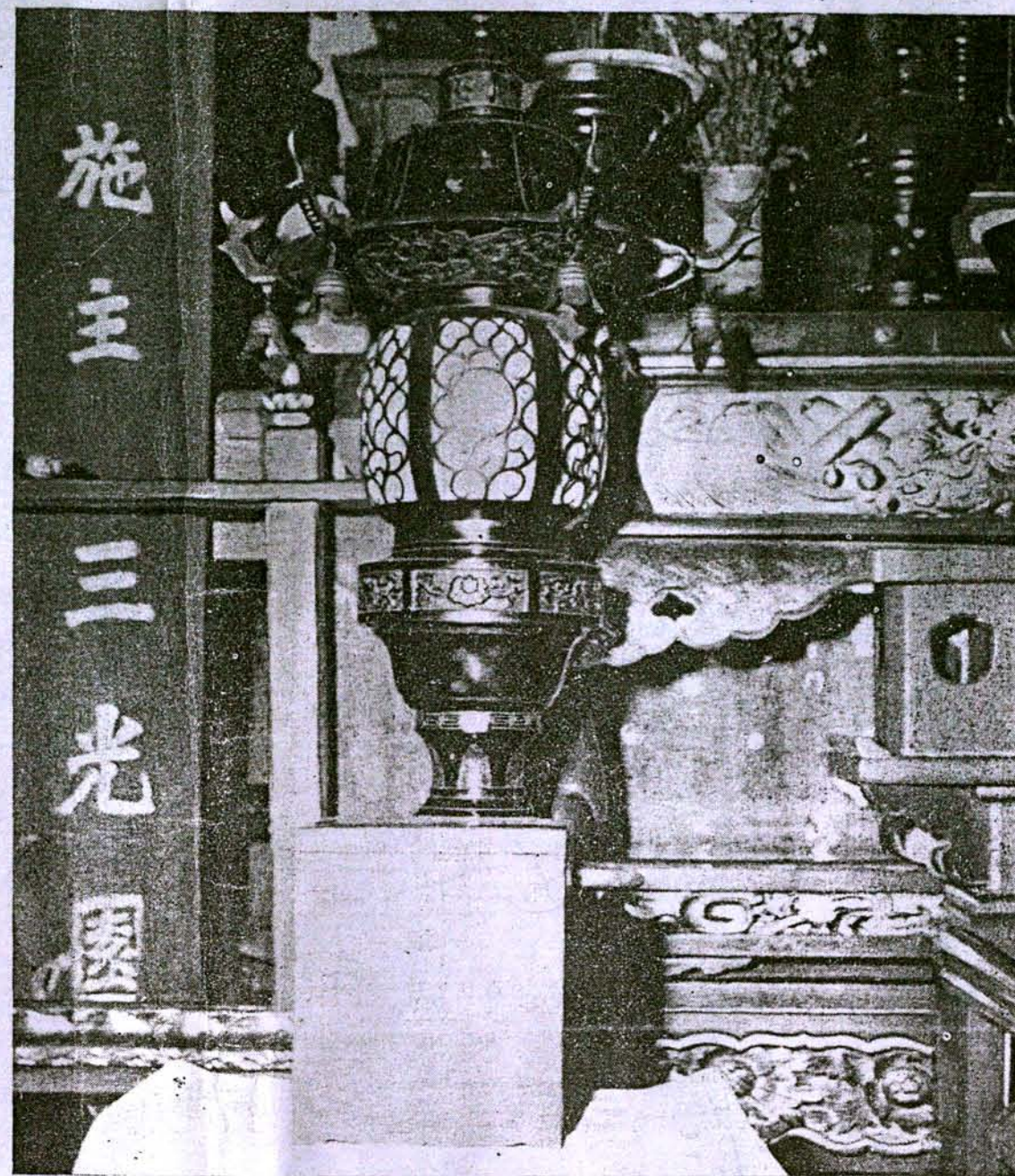
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Interior view of Renkoji temple, showing how Netaji's ashes are kept



Ashes—Outer Casket



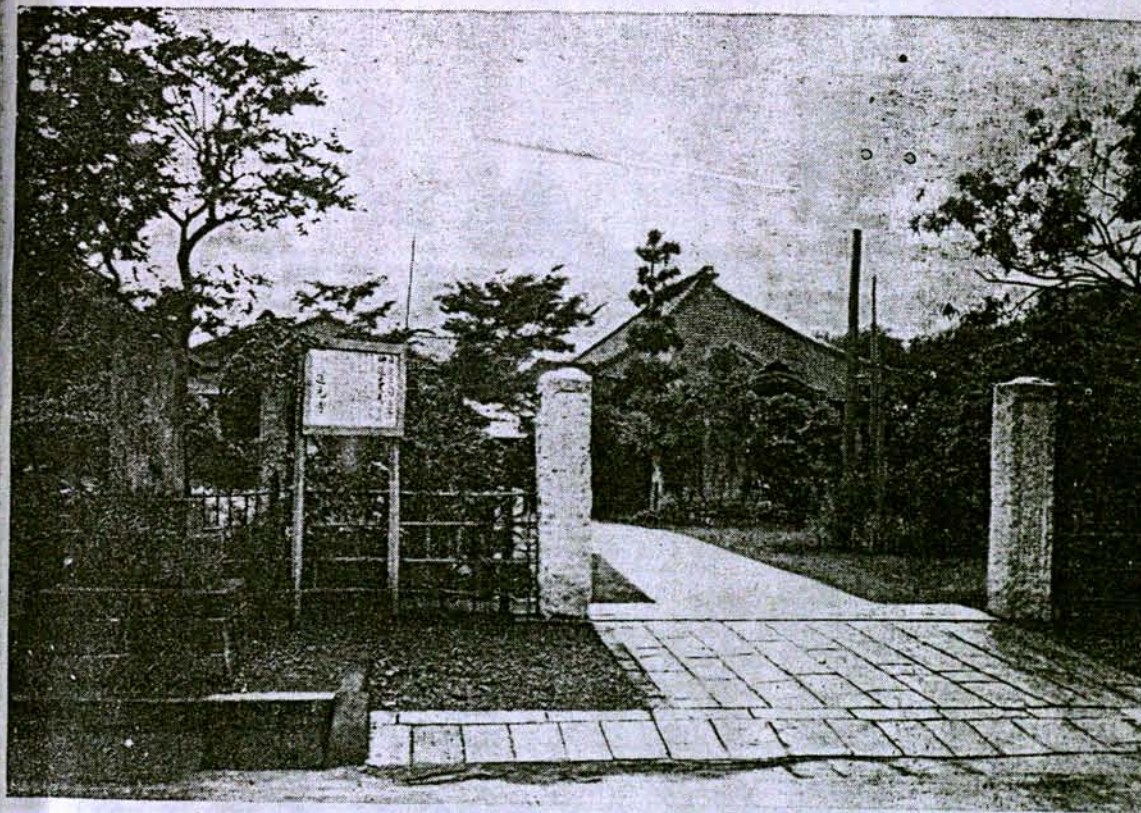


*Ashes—Inner Casket*





*Object covered with a sheet*

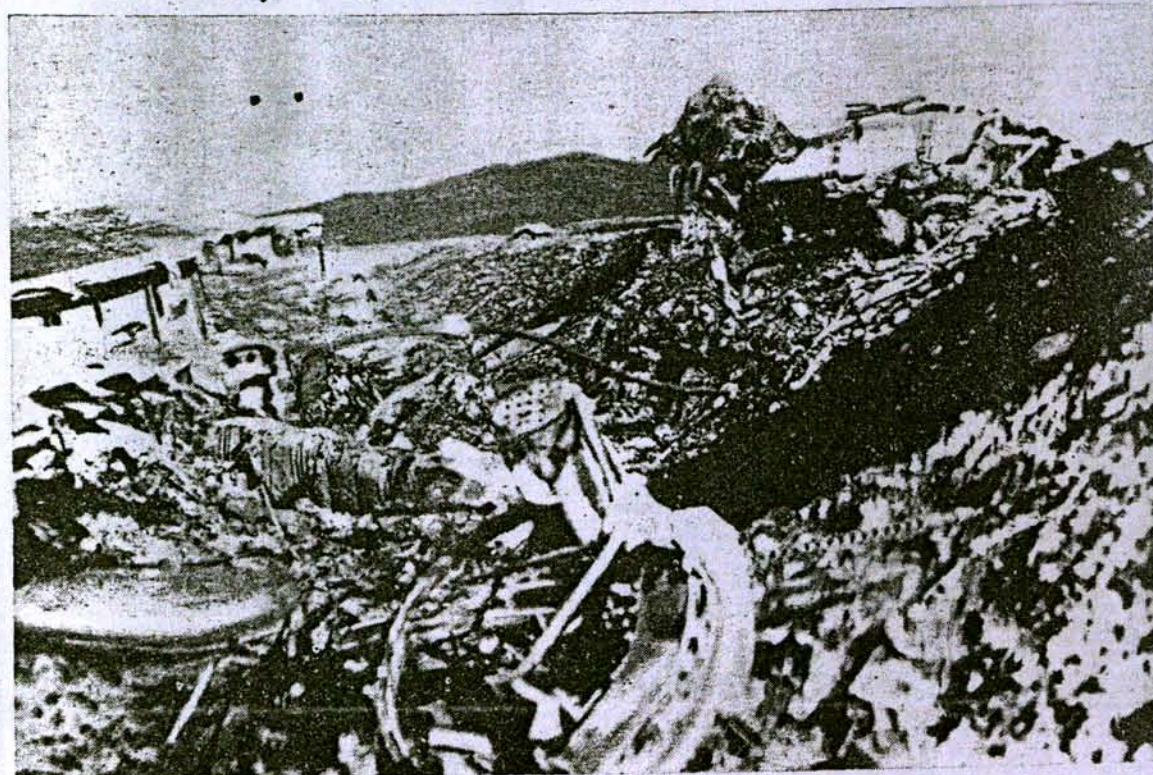


*Exterior view of Renkoji temple*

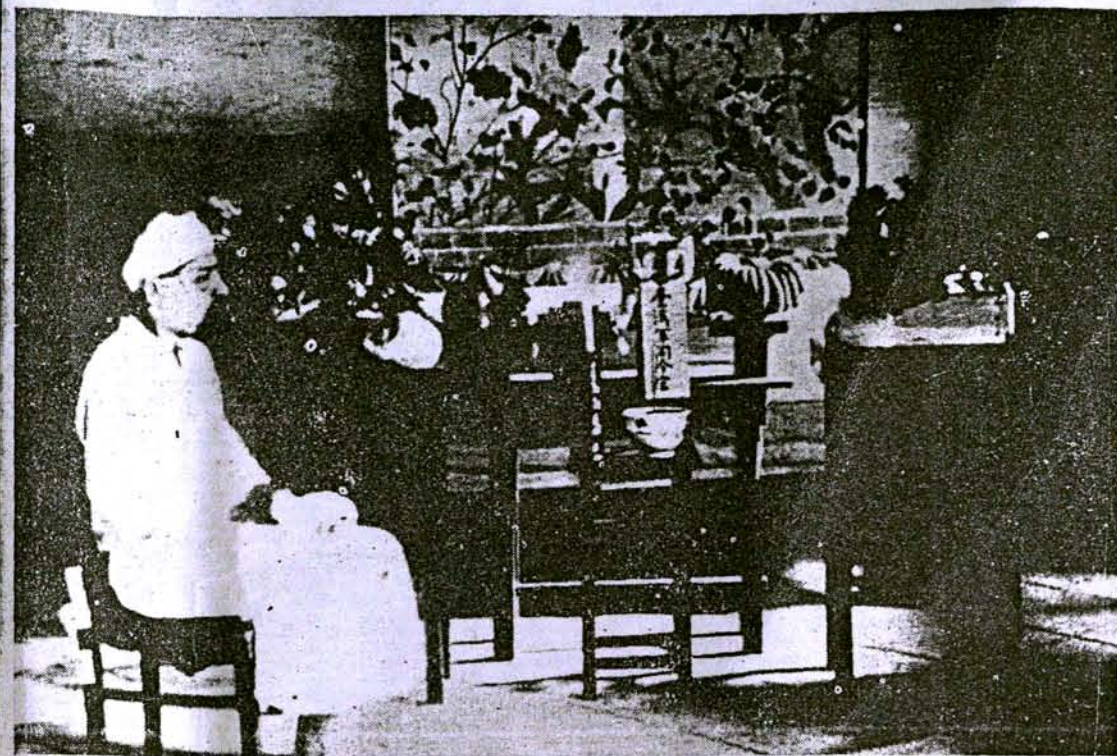








*Wreckage of Plane at Taihoku*



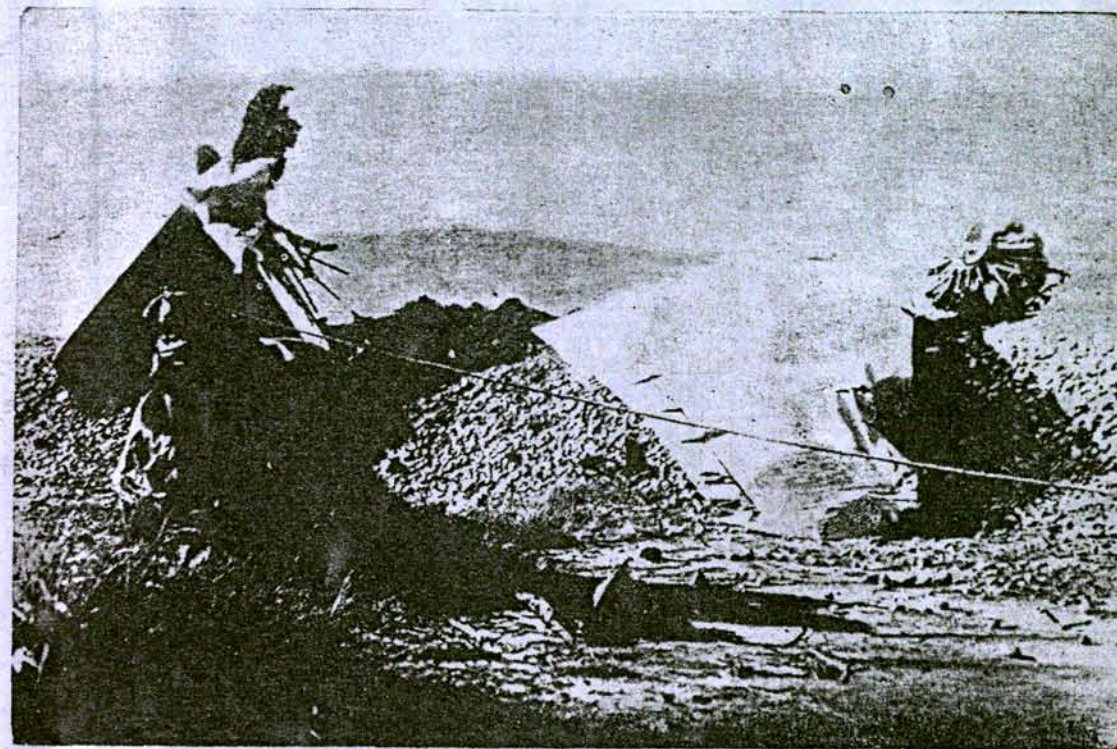
*Col. Habibur Rehman sitting by Netaji's ashes*



S. No.	Name	Date	Place
31.	Shri Dastgir	2nd May 1956	Tourane
32.	Mr. Hachiya	8th May 1956	Tokyo
33.	Shri Narain Das	8th May 1956	Tokyo
34.	Capt. Arai	9th May and morning of 10th May 1956.	Tokyo
35.	General Isoda	10th and 12th May 1956	Tokyo
36.	Mr. J. Murti	11th May 1956	Tokyo
37.	Lt. Col. Nonogaki	14th May 1956	Tokyo
38.	Mr. Watanabe	14th May 1956	Tokyo
39.	Dr. Tsuruta	15th May 1956	Tokyo
40.	Mr. Sato Kazo	16th May 1956	Tokyo
41.	Major Kono	16th May 1956	Tokyo
42.	Mr. Suriya Miyata	17th May 1956	Tokyo
43.	Major Takahashi	17th May 1956	Tokyo
44.	Col. Yano	18th May 1956	Tokyo
45.	Major Kinoshita	21st May 1956	Tokyo
46.	Lt. Col. Takakura	21st May 1956	Tokyo
47.	Mr. T. Hayashida	22nd May 1956	Tokyo
48.	Dr. Yoshimi	22nd and 23rd May 1956	Tokyo
49.	Mr. Sen	22nd and 23rd May 1956	Tokyo
50.	Lt. Col. Shibuya	24th May 1956	Tokyo
51.	Capt. Yamamoto	25th May 1956	Tokyo
52.	Mrs. Yamamoto	25th May 1956	Tokyo
53.	Major Sakai	28th May 1956	Tokyo
54.	Mr. Kazo Nitshi	29th May 1956	Tokyo
55.	Mr. Nakamura	30th May 1956	Tokyo
56.	Rev. Mochizuki	30th May 1956	Tokyo
57.	General Isayama	31st May 1956	Tokyo
58.	Mr. Ota Hide Maru	31st May 1956	Tokyo
59.	Mr. Miyoshi	1st June 1956	Tokyo
60.	Major Nagatomo	1st June 1956	Tokyo
61.	Mr. Kitazawa	2nd June 1956	Tokyo
62.	Shri Asada	2nd June 1956	Tokyo
63.	Col. Figgess	5th June 1956	Tokyo
64.	Dr. Dutt	9th June 1956	Calcutta
65.	Shri Kundan Singh	19th June 1956	New Delhi
66.	Shri Ramamurti	21st June 1956	New Delhi
67.	Shri A. M. N. Sastri	27th June 1956	New Delhi

[Col. T. Sakai: Written statement.]

ANNEXURE II  
(Photographs)



Wreckage of Plane at Taihoku



-2-

Changping bridge into  
Yen and meeting my expenses  
during my stay in Japan  
since August 22, 1945.  
The Hotel in bridge and in  
exchange rate as  
shown in the bank slips.

15/11/45

Mr. S. A. Ayer

I am leaving with you  
treasure (not) treasure of gold and  
silver. It is proper  
time and place, kindly hand  
this to the competent national  
authority which will  
investigate and  
into existence to handle affairs  
arising as a sequel to the  
longer and the India's independence  
lead. At this time, Chandra  
Bose in 2nd Asia. He gold is  
inset and brought it from  
Singapore. The card is balance after.

Photostat copy of list of treasure, signed by Mr. S. A. Ayer

'Copy of Telegram' dated 21st July 1956, from: Indembassy, Peking, addressed to Foreign, New Delhi

Concerning alleged photograph of SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE: We showed this to Foreign Office who have informed us that photograph is of LEE KE HUNG, Medical Superintendent of P.U.M.C. (Peking University Medical College.)

List of Witnesses examined by the Committee

S. No.	Name	Date	Place
1.	Shri Thevar	4th April 1956	New Delhi
2.	Shri Debnath Das	5th April 1956	New Delhi
3.	Capt. Gulzara Singh	6th April 1956	New Delhi
4.	Col. Habibur Rehman	6th to 9th April 1956	New Delhi
5.	Col. Pritam Singh	10th April 1956	New Delhi
6.	Shri S. A. Ayer	11th and 12th April, and morning of 14th April 1956.	New Delhi
7.	General Bhonsle	16th April 1956	New Delhi
8.	Shri A. K. Gupta	16th April 1956	New Delhi
9.	Shri Harin Shah	16th and 17th April 1956.	New Delhi
10.	Col. Thakur Singh	17th April 1956	New Delhi
11.	Shri Majumdar	20th April 1956	Calcutta
12.	Shri Kunizuka	23rd April 1956	Calcutta
13.	Lt. N. B. Das	23rd April 1956	Calcutta
14.	Shri H. K. Roy	24th April 1956	Calcutta
15.	Shri Kalipada Dey	24th April 1956	Calcutta
16.	Shri S. M. Goswami	24th April and 9th June 1956.	Calcutta
17.	Shri J. C. Sinha	25th April 1956	Calcutta
18.	Shri Deben Das	25th April 1956	Calcutta
19.	Shri H. Singha	25th April 1956	Calcutta
20.	Mr. Negishi	25th April 1956	Calcutta
21.	Col. H. L. Chopra	26th April 1956	Calcutta
22.	Shri D. N. Bose	26th April and 8th June 1956.	Calcutta
23.	Mrs. Pal Chowdhury, M.P.	26th April	Calcutta
24.	Shri A. Bose	26th April and 8th June 1956.	Calcutta
25.	Pandit Raghunath Sharma	28th April	Bangkok
26.	S. Ishar Singh	28th April 1956	Bangkok
27.	Shri U. C. Sharma	28th April 1956	Bangkok
28.	Shri A. C. Das	30th April 1956	Bangkok
29.	Shri Ramneo Gosai	1st May 1956	Saigon
30.	Shri A. M. Sahay	1st and 3rd May 1956	Saigon



connected with one another and no longer in the service of their Government, and Japan not being a totalitarian State—would not be expected to state what was not true.

Enquiries made subsequently by (1) British Intelligence teams operating from Delhi, (2) British and American Intelligence teams operating from Tokyo, and (3) non-official enquiry, appear to corroborate the statements of these eye-witnesses and a few others who appeared on the scene immediately after.

A person of the status of Netaji as Head of a State that was not only recognised by Japan, but was helped materially in every way by Japan, and vice versa, was not given the requisite facility and honour due to him from the very start, viz., by providing a separate plane or seats for him and for all of his associates; treatment in a small hospital with a junior medical officer—a Captain; manner of cremation; disposal of ashes, etc., all without due honour and respect, viz., full military funeral, body placed on a gun carriage with full military honours, etc.

4. Cremation. Preliminaries by the two doctors and some of the subordinate Hospital staff.

Main evidence by (1) Habib, (2) Nakamura, and (3) Nagatoma—more or less corroborative.

Regarding Habib—oath of secrecy may be argued only.

Regarding the other two—no interestedness, so their stories supporting

Habib take away most of the charge against Habib for oath of secrecy; in what way could they be obliged to Habib?

No other suggestion that the body was disposed of in any other manner—so body cremated.

The evidence of the doctors will have to be discussed very carefully, as it will surely be a matter of detailed criticism by eminent doctors throughout the world.

5. Ashes. Ashes from the crematorium to Renkoji temple is a long way—first to Nishi Honganji temple, then to Tokyo, etc.

There is nothing to show that there was tampering, but to prove that they were definitely those of Netaji, much more stringent measures required by law should have been taken and a different and very strict procedure, by way of seals, guards, etc., should have been taken.

In all probability, the ashes could be said to be those of Netaji.

6. Treasure. Comments should be minimum.

Evidence recorded by us should be placed in a guarded manner.

We may state that out of the quantity carried by Netaji, a portion eventually was deposited in the National Archives.

We should state that this may be the subject-matter of a separate Enquiry and this Enquiry should start from the complete assets, in cash and kind, and liabilities of the Azad Hind Government.

7. Shri Thevar's statements and statements of Shri Goswami. Their statements should be discussed while dealing with Netaji's death or otherwise and a little more in detail separately later on.

Draft by: Shri S. N. Maitra.

Draft: 10-7-1956

Discussion, correction and finalisation: 13-7-1956.

Submission to Government of India: 16-7-1956.

(Sd.) S. C. BOSE

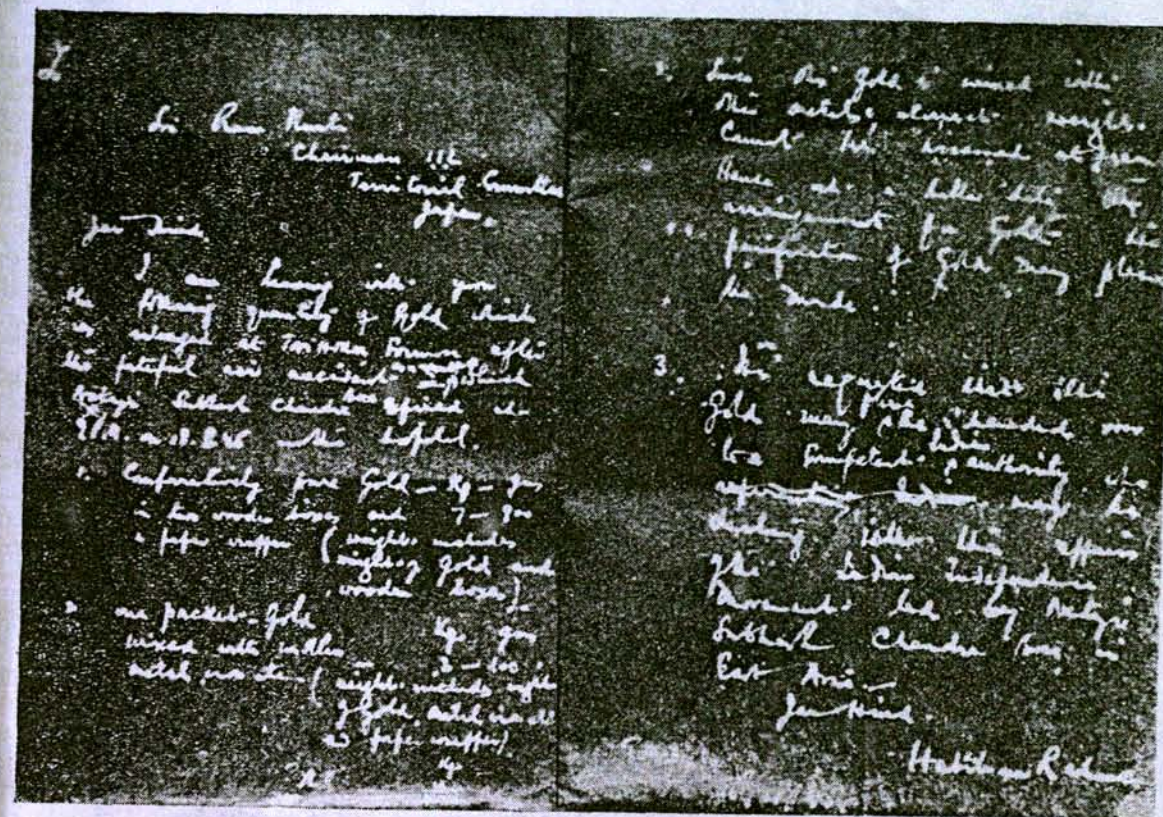
2-7-56

S. N. MAITRA

2-7-56.

SHAH NAWAZ KHAN

2-7-56.



Photostat copy of list of treasure, signed by Col. Habibur Rehman



2. Nippon Government would like to study separately as to the possibility of Your Excellency's making political move toward India through the Chungking Regime.

3. Nippon Government desires that Your Excellency would endeavour in bringing our active combined operations to a successful issue in spite of present difficulty of war situations through good understanding of Nippon's intention.

**Statement of Colonel Habibur Rehman Khan, Indian National Army  
Regarding the Air Crash at Taihoku, Formosa**

At 10-30 hrs. on 16-8-1945 Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose accompanied by a few Government and Army Officers, I being one of the party, left Singapore for Bangkok by a Japanese bomber plane. We reached Bangkok at 15-30 hrs.

At 07-30 hrs. on 17-8-1945, two bomber planes left for Saigon. On the Indian side, the following comprised the party:

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose,  
Sri Ayer,  
Col. Habibur Rehman Khan,  
Col. Gulzara Singh,  
Sri Debnath Das,  
Lt. Col. Pritam Singh,  
Major A. Hasan.

Lt. Gen. Isoda, Chief of the Hikari Kikan, and H.E. Hachiya, Japanese Minister to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, travelled by the other plane.

Saigon was reached at about 10-45 hrs. and negotiations with the Southern Regions Command were started.

At about 15-45 hrs. Lt. Gen. Isoda, H.E. Hachiya and Col. Tada, Staff Officer of H.Q. Southern Region, informed Netaji that a maximum of two seats were available in a bomber plane leaving Saigon at 17-00 hrs. the same day. It was decided to avail of the seats and I was to accompany Netaji.

The plane left Saigon Aerodrome at 17-15 hrs. Six senior Japanese Officers, including Lt. Gen. Shidei, Chief of Staff of the Kwangtung Army, also were the passengers on the same plane. We spent the night at Tourane in French Indo-China where we reached at 19-45 hrs.

At 07-00 hrs. on 18-8-1945, we started from Tourane and reached Taihoku, in Formosa, at 14-00 hrs. Here we halted for about 35 minutes. At 14-35 hrs. the plane took off. It had not yet gained much height and was within the outskirts of the airfield when a loud report like that of an explosion was heard from the front. In actual fact, one of the propellers of the aeroplane had broken. Immediately the plane crashed on the ground and it caught fire both in the front and in the rear.

At the time of the accident Netaji's position in the aeroplane was as follows:

Immediately behind the pilot was seated one Japanese officer and behind him on the left side was Netaji. On his immediate right was the petrol tank. I was behind Netaji.

Netaji got out of the plane from the left side from the front. I followed him. We had to pass through the fire in doing so. As soon as I got out, I saw that Netaji's clothes were on fire, from head to foot. I rushed to help him to remove the clothes. By the time his clothes were removed he had sustained severe burns on his body in addition to serious head injuries received during the crash. In my opinion, petrol had dropped on his clothes from the adjacent tank during the crash. Within 15 minutes we were rushed

to the nearest Nippon Army Hospital. It was about 15-00 hrs. at the time. I also received serious head and body injuries in addition to burns on the face and the body.

Netaji was given immediate medical attention but his condition was very serious. Nippon medical authorities did all they could in his treatment but he unfortunately expired at 21-00 hrs. (T.T.) the same day. Prior to his death he was in his senses and was quite calm. Whenever he talked to me, it was regarding India's Independence. Prior to his death he told me that his end was near and asked me to convey a message from him to our countrymen to the following effect:

"I have fought to the last for India's Independence and now am giving my life in the same attempt. Countrymen! Continue the Independence fight. Before long India will be free. Long Live Azad Hind."

Lt. Gen. Shidei and two other Japanese Officers had died instantaneously after the crash and all others were seriously injured.

I requested the Army authorities to arrange for the early transportation of the body either to Singapore or Tokyo, preferably to Singapore. They promised all help. I was told that arrangements for a box for the body and for the aeroplane were being made and that they had informed Saigon and Tokyo regarding the accident.

On 21-8-1945 a senior Japanese Staff Officer informed me in the hospital that the length of the box did not allow the box being put into the plane. He suggested that the body be cremated in Taihoku. Seeing no other alternative, I agreed to the suggestion and the body was cremated on 22-8-1945 at Taihoku under the arrangement of the Army authorities. The ashes were collected on 23-8-1945.

I have requested the Army authorities to arrange for the removal of the ashes to Tokyo where they can be kept in a safe place and from where at a later date they will be removed to India.

Above is the true account of the unfortunate tragedy and I have requested the authorities to keep it with the ashes so that one day India will know the truth regarding the death of its outstanding and heroic Leader.

[NOTE.—Photographs of the body in the box, myself seated beside, were also taken.]

TAIHOKU, TAIWAN;  
The 24th August, 1945.

(Sd.) HABIBUR REHMAN KHAN, Colonel.

**Principal Points agreed to for Draft Report, dated 30th June 1956**

1. It was Netaji's idea to continue the struggle for the liberation of India. This was thought of by Netaji some time before Germany and Japan surrendered and Netaji had at that time told a selected few that they would sooner or later lose the war. Netaji also discussed about this point with his Cabinet members.

Since October 1944, when Netaji visited Tokyo, he carried out these intentions of his and attempted to contact the Russian Ambassador, and finally decided to go to Manchuria with that purpose in view.

2. Whether the plane crash did take place. The plane carrying Netaji did crash. There is no other evidence to the contrary; the evidence should be considered carefully and in details.

3. Whether Netaji met his death as a result of this accident. The witnesses support this story. There is no reason why they should be disbelieved. After a lapse of about 10 years, these witnesses who belong to different walks of life and to different nationalities—Habib, an Indian and subsequently a Pakistani, and the others, who are Japanese, who are mostly un-

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*Gaimusho's Report regarding Enquiry into the Crash*

THE GAIMUSHO,  
June 4th, 1956.

Dear Mr. Dar,

In compliance with the request of the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Enquiry Commission, made at the Third Regular Meeting on May 26, 1956, I wish to state in reply as follows:

(1) *Official Enquiry Commission on the Accident of the Plane wherein Netaji was emplaned.*

As a result of investigation made at the Operation Section, Repatriation Relief Bureau, Ministry of Health and Welfare, it has been revealed that no official enquiry commission to determine the causes of the accident in question was held so far.

(2) \* \* \* \* \*

I should appreciate it very much if you would be good enough to transmit the above reply to the said Commission.

Sincerely yours,  
HISAJI HATTORI,

Chief of 4th Section, Asian Affairs Bureau,  
GAIMUSHO.

Mr. A. K. Dar,  
First Secretary,  
Embassy of India.

*Note on local Inspection of Renkoji Temple, Tokyo*

On the 30th May after concluding the evidence of Rev. Mochizuki, the head priest of the Renkoji temple, the members of the Committee visited the Renkoji temple accompanied by Rev. Mochizuki and five lay members of the Temple Committee. The Renkoji temple is situated in Suginamiku quarter of Tokyo, about 6 miles from the centre of the town where the Indian Embassy is situated. The temple is of a moderate size, built of timber in the usual style of Japanese Buddhist temples. Around it is a small Japanese garden. The temple, although not very large, is well kept. The ashes are kept in the main shrine. Just behind the altar is a large glass case. In this case are kept various venerated objects such as gilded images of *Bodhisattvas*. On the left hand side of the glass case is a small wooden casket in the shape of a pagoda about 2 ft. high. In front of it is a small portrait of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. A larger photograph of Netaji is kept outside in the left hand corner of the glass case. Incense was burning before it. Rev. Mochizuki took out from the pagoda-shaped casket a rectangular-shaped wooden box painted red. On opening it was revealed a small container about 8" cube covered with some kind of white cloth. On it was written in large English letters in black ink "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose". The contents of the smaller container were not examined. As he was handling these objects, Rev. Mochizuki was intoning some sacred *mantra*. One by one, he put back the container into their original positions, and securely locked with a key the door of the glass case. Before entering the shrine, the Committee was entertained to tea in the Japanese style by the priest and members of the Temple Committee. In all, our Committee spent about half an hour at the temple. As in the

case of most Japanese temples, the temple was very clean both inside and outside. The Committee was satisfied that Rev. Mochizuki takes good care of the ashes, and they are being kept properly within the limited means of the authorities of the Renkoji temple.

Shri Debnath Das.  
171/3, Rash Behari Avenue,  
Calcutta-19.  
The 13th June, 1956.

To  
The Chairman,  
Netaji Enquiry Commission,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI.

Sir,

Enclosed herewith you will kindly find some papers in connection with steps that Netaji adopted to continue India's struggle for freedom. I could not submit these papers when I appeared to give evidence since they were kept at some of my friend's house and could not be had in time.

1. This is the English translation of the message received by Netaji from Tokyo through the Southern Command in reply to Netaji's enquiry on the attitude of the Japanese Government to extend facilities to proceed to Russia with some of his associates should he (Netaji) so desired in the event of Japan's collapse. The English version is, no doubt, rendered by some Japanese officer as was usual and was submitted along with the original letter that was in Japanese. This was delivered to Netaji by the second week of June 1945. (The original English typed copy of this message submitted by the Hikari Kikan is in my possession, enclosed one being the true copy.)

2 & 3. \* \* \*

Jai Hind.  
DEBNATH DAS.

*Copy of Tokyo Telegram to Southern Command Regarding Netaji's  
Opinion for their Consideration*

1. The opinion of the Nippon Government with regard to Your Excellency's plan of approaching the Soviet is as follows:

- (a) Not only the assistance by Nippon Government to Your Excellency who are firmly determined to co-operate to the last with Nippon in order to attain the object of Indian Independence remains wholly unchanged but it also desires to still further strengthen the spiritual tie.
- (b) Nippon Government pays a deep respect with its whole heart to Your Excellency's co-operation with Nippon on the moral strength to the utmost in order to attain Indian Independence, convinced of Nippon's certain victory and without resorting in the least to the opportunism of following in the wake of the powerful in spite of the present unfavourable world situation to Nippon. It may be added that the reason why the above (a) item which is apparently needless to mention has been repeated here is that the Government more than ever earnestly hopes that Your Excellency will push on fighting for the liberation of India with firm determination to display the spirit of live or die together by India and Nippon.
- (c) Nippon Government deems it almost without hope of success to get directly in touch with the Soviet Government on behalf of Your Excellency and it has no intention of doing so.



# ANNEXURE I

1. General Shidei's Service Record.
2. Gaimusho's Report that there was no enquiry into the crash.
3. Committee's report on Renkoji temple.
4. Copy of telegram from the Japanese Government to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose received from Shri Debnath Das.
5. Statement of Col. Habibur Rehman Khan, regarding the air crash at Taihoku, Formosa, dated 24th August 1945.
6. Photostat copy of list of treasure, signed by Col. Habibur Rehman.
7. Photostat copy of list of treasure, signed by Mr. S. A. Ayer.
8. Points of agreement on writing the Report.
9. Copy of Telegram about "Mongolian Delegate".
10. List of witnesses.

## General Shidei's Service Record

THE GAIMUSHO,  
June 4th, 1956.

Dear Mr. Dar,

In compliance with the request of the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Enquiry Commission, made at the Third Regular Meeting on May 26 1956, I wish to state as follows:

(1) :

(2) Military Record on the death of the late Lt. Gen. T. Shidei.

Two copies of the records in question, secured from the Operation Branch, Repatriation Relief Bureau, Ministry of Health and Welfare, is attached hereto as enclosures respectively.

Mentioned above be transmitted to the Commission.

I should appreciate it very much if you would be good enough to transmit the above reply to the said Commission.

Sincerely yours,  
HISAJI HATTORI,

Chief of 4th Section, Asian Affairs Bureau,  
GAIMUSHO.

Mr. A. K. Dar,  
First Secretary,  
Embassy of India.

(Translation)

RYU-SEN-MAN No. 483.

August 4th, 1947

To

President of Demobilization Agency.

FROM

Chief, Korean & Manchurian Affairs Section, First Demobilization Bureau, Demobilization Agency.

[SUBJECT.—Application for Promotion of War-Dead.]

Whereas the person mentioned below comes under Paragraph 5, Article 26 of ICHIFUKU (First Demobilization Bureau) No. 744 of 1946, the application for his promotion is submitted herewith for your consideration.

Date of Death	August 18, 1945
Cause of Death	Death by war
Place of Death	Taihoku Airfield
Position	Attached to Military Headquarters in Manchuria
Military Rank	Lieut. General
Name	Tsunamasa SHIDEI
Date of birth	January 27, 1895
Permanent Domicile	No. 24, Oku-onoe-cho, Yamashina-zushi, Higashiya ma-ku, Kyoto city.

Chief, Korean and Manchurian Affairs Section,  
First Demobilization Bureau,  
Demobilization Agency.

(Official Seal.)

N.B.—The promotion applied for was not approved.

## Military Career of Lieut. General Shidei

December 25, 1915	Appointed Sub-Lieutenant of Cavalry.
August 1, 1940	Appointed Major General.
October 27, 1943	Appointed Lieut. General.
May 23, 1945	Appointed the Chief of Staff of Japanese Corps in Burma.
August 18, 1945	Died by war in Formosa.

Examined and authenticated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(Seal)

(Sd.) YASUTERU, ASAHINA,  
Secretary,  
Ministry of External Affairs.  
(Archives Section).

June 4, 1956

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Col. Rehman says that the box appeared to him to have been tampered with, much lighter in weight, and less than half full. So it is far from clear as to what was collected from Taihoku Airfield, whether and when the container was changed, whether there was any subtraction, and who took delivery of it in Tokyo and when. From the evidence available to us, it is not possible to come to any definite conclusion about the treasure. If it is considered desirable to go more closely into the matter, it may be necessary to institute a separate enquiry, whose scope might well include not only the treasure that was carried by Netaji on his last journey and its recovery, but also examination of the entire assets and liabilities, in cash and kind, of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. It is, however, not certain, how far such an enquiry would be profitable after this lapse of time, especially when such records, as they were, must have been largely destroyed

## CHAPTER VII

## RECOMMENDATION

THE Committee has come to the conclusion that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose met his death in an air crash, and that the ashes now at Renkoji temple, Tokyo, are his ashes. Rev. Mochizuki and the trustees of the Renkoji temple have already kept the ashes for a number of years. Their services deserve to be recognised. If the ashes are taken to be genuine, Renkoji temple cannot obviously be their final resting place. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died ten years ago. It is time that his ashes were brought to India with due honour, and a memorial erected over them at a suitable place. This we recommend for the serious consideration of the Government of India. It may be mentioned in this connection that influential circles in Japan are considering putting up a memorial to Netaji in that country. If Netaji's mortal remains are honoured, and his ideals kept alive, then one could truly ask "Where is death's sting, where, grave thy victory?"

(Sd.) SHAH NAWAZ KHAN

S. N. MAITRA



Col. Habibur Rehman were occupying. There are major discrepancies as to the date, and who received the box. While Mr. Ramamurti says that Col. Habibur Rehman satisfied himself that the box was indeed the same box that had been packed before him at Taihoku, Col. Habibur Rehman says that the seals of the box were broken; it appeared to have been tampered with, was much lighter and only half full. The contents were found to be ornaments of gold and precious stones, all charred, mixed and fused with metals and small bits from the wreckage. They were roughly separated into three lots, according to whether they contained more gold or base metal. Afterwards they were re-packed into a box and nailed. The weight of the valuables was found to be 11 kilograms. This was noted, and a rough list was made and signed by Col. Habibur Rehman, a photostat copy of which is enclosed (Annexure I). Col. Rehman left the valuables in the charge of Mr. Ramamurti to be handed over to any authority which arose in India in succession to Netaji's Movement. At the same time, Mr. Ayer left 300 grams of gold and 20,000 yens in cash with Mr. Ramamurti with similar direction. They did this in order to avoid the valuable properties from being confiscated by the Allies.

7. Mr. Murti kept the valuables with him from 1945 to 1951. Mr. Murti did not keep the money in a Bank. When asked, he said he did this so that the Occupation authorities, who would know of the assets of Japanese Banks, might not confiscate the valuables. He did not take any steps to contact any Indian authorities during all these years. In fact, there is reason to believe that he denied having the treasure with him. He made no attempt to contact even the Indian Mission in Tokyo. He says that he was in correspondence with Mr. Ayer and the latter had advised him not to take any action till the connected matter of Netaji's ashes was satisfactorily solved. Mr. Ayer came to Japan in 1951, and it was only then that Mr. Ramamurti acknowledged that the treasure was with him, and expressed willingness to hand over the same to the Indian Mission in Tokyo. He admitted that he had partly financed Mr. Ayer's trip to Japan. On his return to India, Mr. Ayer met the Prime Minister, and suggested that the treasure might be taken over by the India Government through the Indian Mission in Tokyo. The Prime Minister agreed to this and, on instruction from him, the treasure was taken over by the Indian Mission on the 24th September 1951. The First Secretary of the Mission, Mr. V. C. Trivedi, signed the receipt on the copy of the list made over by Col. Rehman to Mr. Ramamurti in 1945. On the same day, Mr. Ramamurti also handed over 300 grams of gold and 20,000 yens which had been left with him by Mr. Ayer. The valuables were again checked and weighed by the Indian Mission and the weight was found to be a little more than noted in Col. Rehman's original list.

8. The valuables were brought to India and have been kept in the National Museum at Rashtrapati Bhavan. As mentioned, the Committee inspected these valuables at the Museum. Their estimated value is Rupees one lakh. The Museum was inspected twice, and on the second occasion the Committee went along with Kundan Singh, Netaji's personal valet. As already mentioned in Chapter III, Kundan Singh identified a number of articles as belonging to Netaji. The articles found in the Museum were jewellery, and trinkets of the kind, which different witnesses have testified as gifts to Netaji from the Indian public in South-East Asia and which he carried with him on his last journey. It is evident that the charred and damaged pieces of gold and jewellery, etc., which are in the National Museum, formed part of Netaji's baggage in his last journey, which was salvaged from Taihoku Airfield and later recovered from Mr. Murti. It is also seen that what was handed over by Mr. Murti in 1951 tallied with the list signed by Col. Habibur Rehman in 1945. But it is not clear how much was carried by Netaji, and how much of it was recovered. Two suit-cases in which Netaji took the valuables were not weighed. We have only the evidence of witnesses that they were fairly heavy. Only one witness, Lt. Col. Nonogaki, has mentioned the weight as 20 kilos each. Only 11 kilograms of burnt-down jewellery mixed with base metal and ashes had been recovered. Quite clearly, the quantity that has been recovered is much less than what Netaji carried with him. There are a large number of gaps and discrepancies in the chain. It is not clear whether the plane was cordoned off immediately after the crash, and the collection of valuables begun under proper supervision. After it was collected, there is discrepancy as to whether it was left for some days in an air-raid shelter, or taken next morning to the Japanese Military Headquarters at Taihoku. There is doubt as to the container. Some say it was a gasoline can, while others say that it was a wooden box. If the gasoline can was originally filled and sealed, there is no evidence to show who opened it, and why, and put the contents again in a wooden box. The wooden box that was handed over in Tokyo to Mr. Ramamurti was not sealed, but only nailed. Whereas Major Takakura says that he handed over the box to Mr. Murti and Mr. Ayer along with the ashes, Mr. Murti says that only he was asked to come and take the box of valuables a few days after taking delivery of the ashes. Col. Rehman says that Messrs. Ayer and Murti went and brought the box from the Imperial General Headquarters. According to Mr. Ayer, he was not called, but came as if by accident, while Mr. Murti, his brother, and Col. Rehman were cleaning and sorting out broken pieces of jewellery. No receipt was taken or given by the General Headquarters. While Mr. Murti says that Col. Rehman was satisfied that the box was in the same order as he had packed it in Taihoku,



he took with him. As documents were destroyed to avoid falling into Allied hands, reconstruction would be difficult. The only thing that can be said is that Netaji disbursed large amounts in the final stages, and took some valuables and ornaments, etc., with him. Netaji apparently did not want to take the treasure with him. According to the evidence of Pandit Raghunath Sharma, a few days previously Netaji had enquired of him whether he would take charge of the treasure to which Pandit Raghunath Sharma did not agree. Mr. Debnath Das has stated that again at Saigon Airfield Netaji proposed that he would leave the treasure behind. Mr. Debnath Das and Major Hasan did not agree to this, and so Netaji carried the valuables with him.

4. Indian and Japanese witnesses have all deposed clearly about the treasure in Saigon. The plane was held up for about half an hour, as the car carrying the boxes of valuables was delayed. All witnesses have stated that the number of cases which came out of the second car was two and they were hurriedly pushed into the plane, in spite of the protest of the pilot. General Isoda has said that Major Hasan rushed up to say that the two boxes containing presents to Netaji by 3 lakhs of Indians in East Asia had not arrived and so Netaji delayed departure by half an hour till the boxes came. General Isoda did not know what the boxes contained, but from what Major Hasan said he presumed that they contained gold and jewellery. While most witnesses say that the boxes were leather suit-cases about 30" long, Captain Gulzara Singh and Col. Pritam Singh have said that they were wooden boxes of a smaller size. According to Mr. Negishi, he was told by some Hikari Kikan officers that Netaji's baggage included 150 kilos of gold bullion. He goes on to say that some of this treasure accompanied Netaji while the rest of it was left with the party at Saigon to meet various expenses. Be that as it may, it may be taken as conclusive, that from Saigon Netaji carried with him two large leather suit-cases about 30" long containing gold and valuables. While, as stated before, it may be discounted that the value was anything like Rupees one crore, there is no evidence on record which gives the details of the contents of the suit-cases, or any indication of their value.

5. The plane crashed at Taihoku on the 18th of August. Col. Habibur Rehman has stated that he enquired next day as to what happened to the baggage, particularly the two leather suit-cases which contained gold and jewellery. He was told that the plane was completely burnt, and with it the luggage, but some charred jewellery had been salvaged, and kept in safe custody at the Military Headquarters. The collection was done under the supervision of two Japanese Officers, Major K. Sakai, Officer in charge of the aerodrome defence, and Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto, Officer in charge of the aerodrome. According to Major Sakai, when

he came to the scene two hours after the accident, he found Captain Nakamura and his men collecting articles lying on the ground. As their number was insufficient, he lent 30 of his men. Captain Nakamura, on the other hand, says that on being asked by Lt. Col. Nonogaki, he asked his men to collect the valuables. He came and found Major Sakai's men under one Lt. Yamashida doing the collection. Both officers, however, agree that charred and blackened jewellery such as necklaces, rings, medals, etc., were collected. These were put in an 18-litre gasoline can, the top of which was sealed by means of strips of paper on which the officers placed their own seals. About the subsequent disposal there is a slight discrepancy. According to Major Sakai, the can of valuables was kept only one night under guard, and delivered the next day to Lt. Col. Shibuya at the Headquarters. On the other hand, Captain Nakamura says that the can was kept for 4 or 5 days in the air-raid shelter under guard, and thereafter delivered to Lt. Col. Shibuya. On the 5th of September, Col. Habibur Rehman was flown to Tokyo. With him went Lt. T. Sakai and Lt. Hayashida who had been detailed by the Army Headquarters, Formosa, to carry with them Netaji's ashes and his valuables. Major Sakai and Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto have both spoken of an 18-litre gasoline can. Lt. Col. Shibuya, Staff Officer of the Headquarters, also mentions the can. Lt. Col. T. Sakai in his statement describes the container as "one baggage as big as an oil can". But Col. Habibur Rehman and Lt. Hayashida speak of a wooden box.

6. The box of valuables was delivered on the evening of the 7th September at the Imperial General Headquarters, Tokyo. The Duty Officer, Major Kinoshita, who first received it, made over charge next morning to Lt. Col. Takakura. Both say that the box was a wooden box nailed down but not sealed. How a sealed gasoline can could become a nailed wooden box is not clear. According to Lt. Col. Takakura, on the 8th September morning he phoned Mr. Ramamurti who came with Mr. Ayer and took charge both of Netaji's ashes and valuables. Mr. Ramamurti says that two or three days after his arrival in Tokyo (that would be 9th or 10th September), Col. Habibur Rehman asked him to bring the box of valuables, and Mr. Ramamurti accordingly went and brought it from the Imperial General Headquarters. The box was a heavy wooden box, and a porter was engaged to carry it. Col. Habibur Rehman says that a few days after his arrival in Tokyo, Messrs. Ayer and Ramamurti were called to the Imperial General Headquarters and the box containing the valuables was handed over to them. Mr. J. Murti corroborates his brother. Mr. Ayer does not say where the box was received, but indicates that in the last week of September he chanced upon Col. Rehman, Mr. Ramamurti and Mr. J. Murti cleaning and sorting out the charred jewellery in the house he and



## CHAPTER VI

### TREASURE

ALTHOUGH in the terms of reference of the Committee, there was no mention of the treasure carried by Netaji on his last flight, in the course of their examination a number of witnesses spoke of the treasure. In fact, in Japan, to judge from newspaper articles, there was keen interest as to what happened to this treasure. In view of the public interest in the subject, and evidence given before them, the Committee feel that some mention should be made in this Report about this treasure.

2. It was the intention of Netaji to depend as little as possible on his Japanese allies, and to finance the Indian National Army from resources collected from Indian residents in South-East Asia. For this purpose, regular collection drives were made by Netaji and his lieutenants, and large funds were collected. A special committee called "Netaji Fund Committee" was established under the Minister of Revenue. Gold and other valuables were generously donated by Indians in South-East Asia. On the occasion of his Birthday in January 1945, Netaji was weighed against gold. Not only cash and valuables, but immovable properties used to be donated. Habib Sahib of Rangoon gave away at one time all his estate in landed property, cash and jewellery valued at Rupees one crore and three lakhs. In return he asked from Netaji a pair of khaki shirt and shorts, so that he might work for the Independence Movement (Page 160 of Major General A. C. Chatterjee's book *India's Struggle for Freedom*). The Funds of the Azad Hind Government were handled by the Azad Hind Bank. How much of the liquid assets were carried by Netaji during his retreat from Rangoon onwards, is not precisely known. Mr. Debnath Das says that at the time of the retreat from Rangoon, treasure valued at Rupees one crore, consisting mostly of ornaments and gold bars, was withdrawn from the Azad Hind Bank, and taken away packed in 17 small sealed boxes. General Bhonsle says that Netaji had brought with him to Bangkok gold ornaments and cash packed in six steel boxes. The jewellery was a gift from Indians in South-East Asia. He did not see the jewellery, and had no idea of its value. Mr. Dinanath, Chairman of the Azad Hind Bank, who was interrogated by the British Intelligence soon after the end of the war, had said that on the 24th April 1945 when Netaji left Rangoon, he took with him from the Bank 140 lbs. of gold. According to Pandit Raghunath Sharma, one of the leaders of the Indian Independence League at Bangkok, Netaji took with him gold and other valuables, which

were collected from the people, of a total value exceeding Rupees one crore. That some valuables were carried by Netaji with him is clear from the evidence, but from the very start doubt and discrepancies creep in as to the size and value of the treasure. Pandit Raghunath Sharma has stated that the valuables were kept in 10 or 12 steel boxes—13"×12"×10"; some a little smaller than others. General Bhonsle says that the contents of six steel boxes were re-packed in two canvas bags at the time of Netaji's departure. But Mr. Debnath Das has said that, before leaving Bangkok, the contents of the 17 treasure boxes mentioned by Mr. Das were re-packed into two large suit-cases, 30" to 36" long. It is doubtful whether gold and ornaments of the value of Rupees one crore could be carried in two large leather suit-cases. Netaji's personal valet, Kundan Singh, was examined by the Committee. According to him, the treasure was packed in 4 steel cases of different sizes—20"×13"×16" and 12"×6"×6". He was present at the time when the boxes were checked before Netaji's departure from Bangkok. He says, "The boxes contained articles of jewellery which are commonly worn by Indian women such as chains of ladies' watches, necklaces, bangles, bracelets, earrings, etc. They were mostly of ladies. There were also pounds and guineas. There were some chains which had guinea pieces attached to them. There were small gold wires, but there were no gold bars. . . . Besides these 4 boxes containing the treasure, Netaji's personal effects, and certain other valuable articles which he had brought from Singapore, were kept in a small leather attache case. These contained a gold cigarette case which was presented to Netaji by Hitler." Lt. Kunizuka of the Hikari Kikan who was constantly in touch with Netaji mentions that he was shown the valuables the same night, and agrees with Kundan Singh, although he does not mention the number of boxes.

3. On his last visit, Netaji made heavy payments both at Singapore and Bangkok. His Japanese Secretary and Interpreter, Mr. Negishi, says that before leaving Singapore, as ordered by Netaji, he withdrew from the Japanese Bank 8 crore yens out of a loan of 10 crores from the Japanese Government. It was drawn in paper money, and spent in payments to I.N.A. and civilian personnel. Mr. Debnath Das says that on the 17th August, just before leaving Bangkok, Netaji made large last-minute gifts of 1½ million ticals to Chulalongkorn Hospital and University and sanctioned two to three months' pay to all officers and men of the I.N.A. He adds that this was not paid out of the treasure brought from Burma, but from the funds of the Thailand Indian Independence League. The same witness has said that among the baggage of Netaji was a large suitcase containing documents and currency. The picture of the last hurried days is confused. It is not known how much Netaji withdrew, how much was spent, and how much in gold and jewellery

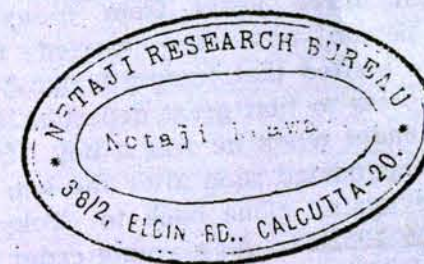




The priest of Renkoji temple, holding Netaji's portrait and the casket  
(FROM *Amrita Bazar Patrika*)

had been changed since 1953. On looking at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, dated the 5th June 1956, that is, the picture of the urn appearing on its front page, it is seen that the writing is in block letters and not in italics.

Mr. Ayer went to Tokyo and visited the Renkoji temple in 1951. He has submitted a photo of the urn. The Committee also took a photo of the urn in June 1956. The writing on all these photos "NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE" appears to be identical. They are in block letters. A copy of the photo submitted by Mr. Ayer and the one taken by the Committee are enclosed (Annexure II). It will be seen that Mr. Goswami has made a completely erroneous statement. After having examined the statement of these witnesses, it is clear that the reasons for doubting that the ashes did not belong to Netaji, are either based on insubstantial grounds, or on wrong facts and therefore have to be discarded.





the smaller container were not examined. As he was handling these objects, Rev. Mochizuki was intoning some sacred *mantras*. One by one, he put back the containers into their original positions and securely locked with a key the door of the glass case. . . . As in the case of most Japanese temples, the temple was very clean, both inside and outside. The Committee was satisfied that Rev. Mochizuki takes good care of the ashes, and they are being kept properly within the limited means of the authorities of the Renkoji temple."

9. The reasons for doubt given by Mr. J. C. Sinha, who went along with Mrs. Illa Pal in 1955, are somewhat different. He says that he had met one Mr. Virick, a young man, who was one of the Tokyo Cadets (I.N.A.) during the war. He was the cadet who had carried the urn containing the ashes to the Renkoji temple on the day of the original funeral ceremony on the 18th September 1945. Mr. Virick had returned to Japan, and was studying in the Tokyo University. His name was mentioned in this connection specifically by witness Mr. J. Murti. From Mr. Sinha's statement it appears that Mr. Virick who went with him had some difficulty in finding his way to the temple, and in finding out where the urn was kept. Mr. Virick confessed to Mr. Sinha that since depositing the ashes in 1945 he had not been to the Renkoji temple. Mr. Sinha has given the reason for his disbelief. He says, "... had they been Netaji's ashes, as Mr. Virick told me, the person who is in Tokyo for the last three years from today, and if he had been really that person who had carried the ashes to the temple, should have visited that temple a number of times to pay his homage and respects to that great departed leader." Mr. Virick was in Tokyo as a cadet when he was a boy. It is presumed that like others he was repatriated soon after the war terminated. Years have passed and he again came back to Tokyo as a University student apparently in 1952-53. As a young cadet he could not have had much to do with Netaji, and one cannot say how much boyish impression the grown-up man retained. In any case, it would hardly be fair or logical to arrive at any conclusion about the genuineness of the ashes on the basis of personal reactions—apparent lack of attachment for the same ashes on the part of Mr. Virick.

10. The third person who cast doubt is Mr. S. M. Goswami. Mr. Goswami appeared before the Committee twice. In his second statement recorded on the 16th June, Mr. Goswami says that whereas in 1953 he found that the writing on the urn of the words "NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE'S ASHES" was in italics, he was surprised to find a picture in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, dated the 5th June 1956, that the writing "NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE" was in block letters. He concluded that the whole thing



Renkoji temple in Tokyo



such time as they could be delivered to the proper authorities. Every year on the 18th of August, Rev. Mochizuki offers prayers to the dead. From 1945 when the ashes were deposited till 1950 nobody came to see or pay respects to the ashes except Mr. Ramamurti. In May 1950, the then Head of the Indian Mission, Mr. K. K. Chettur, visited the temple. Since then, there have been many visitors including Mr. Ayer in 1951. Last year (1955) there was quite a big ceremony on the Death Anniversary Day, the 18th of August. A number of Japanese notables, including Madam Tojo, General Nakamura, General Kawabe, General Mutaguchi, General Katakura, attended. Our Committee visited the Renkoji temple and recorded a note which is enclosed (Annexure I). A series of photographs were taken showing the interior and exterior of the temple and the inner and outer caskets in which the ashes are kept. Copies of these will be found in Annexure II.

7. From what has been said, it will be seen that the ashes were moved in stages from the crematorium to Nishi Honganji temple, from there to Minami Aerodrome, and thence to Tokyo Imperial General Headquarters. The progress thereafter was from the Imperial General Headquarters, first to Mr. Ramamurti's house, and then to Mrs. Sahay's house, and finally to the Renkoji temple. There is no break in the chain. From the first, i.e., from the crematorium, the ashes were taken charge of by the Formosan Army, and responsible officers were concerned with its keeping in the Nishi Honganji temple, and its delivery to the Imperial General Headquarters. That the ashes were well looked after in the temple, has been deposed by the priest of a neighbouring temple. At the Imperial General Headquarters, the first Duty Officer kept the ashes in his own custody, and the next Duty Officer handed them over to the local representative of Netaji's Movement, Mr. Ramamurti. Messrs. Ramamurti and Ayer took delivery and, after due ceremony, installed the ashes in Renkoji temple. Since then, Rev. Mochizuki has looked after the ashes carefully. There is, therefore, good reason to believe that the ashes that were taken out from the crematorium, Taihoku, on or about the 21st of August 1945, were the same ashes as were deposited at the Renkoji temple, Tokyo, on or about the 18th September 1945, and the very same ashes remain in that temple today. It is true that such precautions as were necessary to prove indisputable identity were not taken. At no stage was the casket containing the ashes sealed, no formal receipts issued, nor again continuous watch kept over it. So, although there cannot be absolute certainty, nevertheless, it can be said that, in all probability, the ashes kept in Renkoji temple, Tokyo, are the ashes of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

8. Three witnesses have expressed doubts that the ashes kept in the Renkoji temple are not the ashes of Netaji Subhas Chandra

Bose. One of the witnesses who had doubts is Mrs. Illa Pal Chowdhury, M.P. She went to Japan in a party with Mr. J. C. Sinha and another gentleman, in connection with the World Religionists Conference in 1955, and visited the Renkoji temple along with her companions. She says, "I got the feeling that the ashes were not Netaji's ashes, because the temple was in a very dilapidated condition. It is a tiny temple in an out of the way place. It is almost 18 to 20 miles out of Tokyo, it may be a little more or less. The ashes are kept in a casual manner, wrapped up in an old chaddar and the dignity which should accompany Netaji's ashes is not there. That is the feeling which I had and I would like to convey this to the Committee." It will be seen that this opinion is subjective, and not so much based on a study of the facts and circumstances. As for the condition of the temple, the information given by Mrs. Illa Pal is largely incorrect. The temple is not 18 to 20 miles out of Tokyo, but only 6 miles from the centre of the city, and is in that part of Tokyo known as Suginamiku. It is not in a dilapidated condition, but is in an excellent state of preservation. This will be seen from the photos of the exterior and interior of the temple, taken at the time when the Committee was in Tokyo in May-June 1956 (Annexure II).

There is no reason to believe that the temple was in a dilapidated condition a year back. The ashes are not kept in a casual manner, but well kept, and looked after by the priest, Rev. Mochizuki. The Renkoji temple was inspected by the members of the Committee on the 30th May 1956. An extract from the note (Annexure I) given below will show the condition of the temple and how the ashes are kept:

"The Renkoji temple is situated in Suginamiku quarter of Tokyo, about 6 miles from the centre of the town, where the Indian Embassy is situated. The temple is of a moderate size, built of timber in the usual style of Japanese Buddhist temples. Around it is a small Japanese garden. The temple, although not very large, is well kept. The ashes are kept in the main shrine just behind the altar in a large glass case. In this case are kept various venerated objects, such as gilded images of *Bodhisattvas*. On the left-hand side of the glass case is a small wooden casket in the shape of a pagoda about 2 ft. high. In front of it is a small portrait of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. A larger photograph of Netaji is kept outside in the left-hand corner of the glass case. Incense was burning before it. Rev. Mochizuki took out from the pagoda-shaped casket a rectangular-shaped wooden box painted red. On opening it was revealed a small container about 8" cube covered with some kind of white cloth. On it was written in large English letters in black ink "NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE". The contents of



out from a safety locker. It had straps of long-cloth with which to sling around the neck of the bearer. It was a cubical box of about 1 foot dimension. Several other Military personnel who were present solemnly bowed to the urn. It was received by Mr. Ayer. He was visibly moved by an overwhelming emotion. An Army Sedan car was arranged for our conveyance. Mr. Ayer and myself took the urn direct to my house."

4. At that time, Mr. Murti's house was being used for all purposes as the Headquarters of the Indian Independence League. The urn was placed on a pedestal and flowers and incense were put on it. On the urn, which was so far without any marking, the words "NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE" were written in English letters by Mr. Ayer. Indian cadets, generally known as Tokyo Boys, came and kept vigil over the ashes. The same night Col. Habibur Rehman turned up first at Mr. Murti's house, and later went to Mrs. Sahay's house, and met Mr. Ayer who was staying there. Since hearing the story of the crash, Mr. Ayer had held up his judgment awaiting the arrival of Col. Habibur Rehman. Mr. Murti in his statement says: "Mr. Ayer lost no time in confronting him with a barrage of questions to all of which Col. Rehman very calmly, seriously and solemnly gave adequate replies. This conversation definitely cleared all doubts which Mr. Ayer had, and now Mr. Ayer was resolved that the crash was an indisputable reality, and Netaji was a victim of it. Col. Rehman himself was surprised that Mr. Ayer should doubt his story. He showed his own hands and face as visible proof of what had happened. With a serious and solemn face, and eyes burning with sincerity Col. Rehman allayed all doubts of anyone who came in contact with him, and we all accepted this as truth without a shadow of doubt in our minds." Next day he repeated the story to a bigger audience. Fearing that he might be arrested by the Allies, Col. Habibur Rehman also handed over to Mr. Murti, a copy of a brief written statement which was dated 24th August 1945 about what had happened to Netaji. (As previously stated, this statement was handed over to the Committee by Mr. J. Murti.) (Annexure I.)

5. To revert to the ashes, as the American Occupation of Japan had begun, Mr. Murti and his friends felt that an elaborate funeral ceremony would attract attention, and might be treated as a hostile demonstration by the Occupation Forces. They, therefore, decided to hold such a ceremony on a modest scale. Large ceremonies are usually held at large temples like Nishi Honganji temple, Tokyo. For the modest ceremony they looked for a smaller temple, and fixed upon the Renkoji temple in the same quarter of Tokyo, Suginamiku, in which Mr. Murti lived. The priest, Rev. Mochizuki,

also agreed to the proposal. At the request of Mrs. Sahay, the ashes were kept in her house for a day, and homage was paid to them also. Then the funeral ceremony was held at the Renkoji temple. There is some difference as to the date. Mr. Ramamurti says that it was held on the 12th or 13th of September. Mr. Ayer gives the date as 14th September. According to Col. Habibur Rehman (who, however, was not present) it was five or six days after his arrival in Tokyo. According to the priest, Rev. Mochizuki, the date was the 18th of September. On the day of the funeral ceremony, the ashes were carried in a procession from Mrs. Sahay's house to the Renkoji temple. Mr. J. Murti has described the occasion thus:

"All the Tokyo I.N.A. cadets, my brother and I, Mrs. Sahay and her family and the I.N.A. broadcasting unit were present. Mr. Ayer was also with the procession. Col. Rehman could not accompany the procession as he was wanted by the American Police for interrogation. Besides the Tokyo cadets numbering about 40, there were a small number of Japanese. About 10 or 15 Japanese military officers and civilians were also present in the procession. The ashes were carried by a cadet by the name of Virick. The procession went from Mrs. Sahay's house to the Renkoji temple, which was at a distance of about two miles from her house. On arrival at the temple, the ashes were put on the altar, and as the flowers and wreaths were placed, the religious ceremony was conducted by four or five Buddhist priests."

Lt. Col. Takakura says that he attended the funeral ceremony as a representative of the Imperial General Headquarters. There were approximately 100 persons, including some Japanese. The details of the procession given by Mr. J. Murti are corroborated by Rev. Mochizuki, priest of the Renkoji temple. About the ceremony he says: "The temple of which I am the priest is a Buddhist temple. When the ashes were brought, we placed them on a wooden stand. The ashes were contained in a small wooden box, about 8" cube. It was wrapped in white cloth on which was written NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE. I can read printed English a little. At the ceremony I called six other priests. I stood in the front. We burnt incense (*aggarbattis*). Mr. Murti gave 30 yens wrapped in a piece of paper. I distributed this sum amongst all the priests. . . . The ceremony lasted for one hour, after which people went away, and I stayed behind in the temple by the side of the ashes to make sure that nobody came and took them away."

6. According to Rev. Mochizuki, after the funeral ceremony it is customary for the people to take away the ashes, but in this case he was asked by Mr. Ramamurti, Mrs. Sahay and a Japanese Staff Officer to keep the ashes in a befitting manner, as they belonged to a great man, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He agreed to do so till



the box containing valuables, and asked Lt. Col. T. Sakai to take charge of them. Sub. Lt. T. Hayashida was also asked to proceed to the Taihoku Aerodrome to carry the two boxes to Tokyo. According to the written statement of Lt. Col. T. Sakai, at that time his hands and face were still bandaged, and he could not lift any luggage. One Major Nakamiya, who was acquainted with Col. Habibur Rehman, also went on the same plane. Lt. Hayashida says that he arrived at the aerodrome at 11 A.M. on the 5th of September, and found that Lt. Col. Sakai, Major Nakamiya and Col. Habibur Rehman were there. There were also two boxes—one containing Netaji's ashes, and the other gold and jewellery. The first box was 1 foot cubical in shape, and the second box was 3 ft. x 2½ ft. x 2 ft. Both were of wood. The first was covered with white cloth, and the second had a leather covering. Both were nailed. He slung the box containing the ashes from his neck in the Japanese style. According to Lt. Col. Sakai, the aerodrome was Minami Aerodrome near Taihoku. The plane accident had taken place at the bigger Matsuyama Aerodrome. Major Nagatomo had arranged for the box containing the ashes to be taken from the temple, and delivered at the aerodrome. The aeroplane in which the party was travelling was, according to Col. Habibur Rehman, a Red Cross plane. Lt. Col. Sakai says that it was a 97 heavy bomber marked with a green cross. It flew to Gannosu Airfield near Fukuoka in Kyushu, the southern-most island of Japan. There is some discrepancy as to what happened then. According to Lt. Col. Sakai and Lt. Hayashida they all left by train next afternoon at 3 P.M., after having collected a guard of one Sergeant and two soldiers from the local Military Headquarters. According to Lt. Col. Sakai, they had consultations at Fukuoka and decided that, in the interest of safety, the party should be divided into two. While Col. Habibur Rehman and Major Nakamiya flew on to Tokyo, he (Lt. Col. Sakai) and Lt. Hayashida, with the ashes and the box of valuables, proceeded by train, attended by a guard of three soldiers from the local Army Headquarters. There is also discrepancy as regards the time of departure from Fukuoka and arrival at Tokyo. Col. Habibur Rehman says that the party left by night by goods train, and next morning (6th September) they reached Tokyo. Lt. Col. Sakai says that he and Lt. Hayashida left Fukuoka on the morning of 6th September, and reached Tokyo the same evening. According to the current time-table of the Japanese National Railways, even fast Express trains take 20 to 22 hours to reach Tokyo from Fukuoka (Hakata). It is unlikely that in 1945, after the war, the service was so much faster. So the time of travel, approximately 12 hours, given by Col. Habibur Rehman or Lt. Col. Sakai, is incorrect. The timing mentioned by Lt. Hayashida is more reasonable. He says that the

party left Fukuoka at 3 P.M. on the 6th September and arrived at 6 P.M. on the 7th September. This date tallies with what has been mentioned by two officers of the Imperial General Staff, Major Kinoshita and Lt. Takakura, who received the ashes. However, the discrepancy as regards the time is not of great importance.

3. All the three witnesses, Col. Habibur Rehman, Lt. Col. Sakai and Lt. Hayashida, say that immediately on arrival at Tokyo the two boxes containing the ashes and valuables were taken to the Imperial General Headquarters. As it was after office hours, they made over charge to the Duty Officer, Major Kinoshita. The Duty Officer, Major Kinoshita, was examined by the Committee. He said that on the 7th of September at 11 P.M. an officer of the rank of Lt. Col. handed over to him for safe custody two wooden boxes which he said he had brought from Taiwan (Formosa). One box was 8" in size and the other 10" in size. One was light and the other heavy. The boxes were nailed and wrapped in cloth but were not sealed. The Officer who brought them said that the smaller box contained the ashes of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, while the bigger one contained gold. As the boxes were received late at night, Major Kinoshita kept them in his room in his personal custody, and in the morning handed them over to the next Duty Officer, Lt. Col. Takakura. Lt. Col. Sakai went round to the Imperial General Headquarters next morning, and met Lt. Col. Takakura, Chief of the Military Affairs Section, whom he knew, and confirmed that he had received the ashes and the box containing valuables. Neither the Duty Officers gave or took any receipt for the two boxes, nor made any written entries about them. Having taken charge of the ashes, Lt. Col. Takakura called the other officers of the Headquarters and paid respects to Netaji's ashes. He then contacted Mr. Ramamurti, President of the Indian Independence League, Tokyo, over the telephone, and asked him to come to the Headquarters and take charge of the ashes. A car was also arranged for Mr. Murti. Mr. Murti came in about half an hour's time, accompanied by Mr. Ayer who had by then arrived in Tokyo. At the main entrance of the Imperial General Headquarters, on the morning of the 8th September, the ashes were handed over to Messrs. Murti and Ayer, by Lt. Col. Takakura in a simple and solemn ceremony which is described by Mr. Murti in the following words:

"There Major Takakura (later Lt. Col.) was present, and there were two or three other officers. I do not recollect whether General Arisui was there. General Arisui was in the Imperial General Headquarters. Major Takakura told us that General Arisui had asked him to convey his personal condolences to us and to deliver the ashes to us. The urn was wrapped in white cloth, and was taken



a routine matter. More so, as the plane carried distinguished persons like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Lt. General Shidei. But no such enquiry was held. On being questioned, General Isayama first denied that the Formosan Army had any responsibility to enquire into an accident of aircraft that did not belong to them—the plane in question belonged to the Third Air Army at Singapore. Later on he admitted that the local Army Command was expected to hold an enquiry, and went on to say that a report about this particular plane crash was submitted through him, by Lt. Col. Shibuya, to the Imperial General Headquarters. As mentioned in a previous chapter dealing with the air crash, Lt. Col. Shibuya denied knowledge of any such report. Netaji was the Head of a State allied to Japan in war, but actually the cremation of his body was a very quiet affair, attended only by the same Major Nagatomo and a dozen soldiers. Truly, it may be said, "not a drum was heard, not a funeral note". One would have expected him to be buried with the usual military honours—gun carriage draped in flag, soldiers lining with reversed arms, and so on. It is true that there was a certain amount of disorganisation following the Japanese surrender on 15th of August 1945, but even taking this into account, there remains a residual impression that all that could have been done, was not done.

## CHAPTER V

## NETAJI'S ASHES

THE last part of this sad story is about Netaji's ashes. The day the ashes were taken out of the crematorium, the urn in which they were kept was taken and left at the Nishi Honganji temple in Taihoku city. Col. Habibur Rehman, Major Nagatomo and Mr. J. Nakamura, Interpreter, went to the temple. Mr. Nakamura has said that the urn was handed over to the Head Priest, with instructions that it should be well looked after, and fresh flowers placed before it every day. The urn was to be kept for the time being in the temple, till it was taken away to its final resting place. This temporary deposit seems to have been customary, for Mr. Nakamura says that in the same temple he saw another urn containing the ashes of General Shidei. There were two Buddhist temples near Nanmon Military Hospital, Taihoku: one was the Nishi (West) Honganji temple which was the biggest temple in Formosa, and had twelve priests, and the other was the Higashi (East) Honganji temple which had eight priests. The Nishi Honganji temple was nearer to the Nanmon Military Hospital, and the other temple was 600 metres away from it. These details have been given by the priest of Higashi Honganji temple, Rev. H. Hidemaru, whom the Committee examined as a witness. No priest from the Nishi Honganji temple could be traced. According to Rev. Hidemaru, the ashes were kept in a white box in the Nishi Honganji temple. He says that the urn containing the ashes was kept there by the Japanese Army who looked after it carefully and later brought it to Tokyo. He says that a funeral ceremony was held at Nishi Honganji temple towards the end of August 1945. Major Nagatomo says that he attended a funeral ceremony at the Nishi Honganji temple, either on the day the ashes were deposited, or on the next day. Lt. Col. Shibuya, the Staff Officer, also mentions the funeral ceremony at this temple. It appears that there was a ceremony also in the Higashi Honganji temple. Rev. Hidemaru says that on the 22nd or 23rd (i.e., soon after the ashes were brought to Nishi Honganji temple) his own Head Priest told him that a ceremony would be held for an important Indian personality on the 26th or 27th of August. He goes on to say that this ceremony did take place.

2. On the 5th September, a plane was flying to Tokyo. A passage was secured for Col. Habibur Rehman who had been asking for it from the Headquarters of the Formosan Army. Lt. Col. Shibuya, the Staff Officer of the same Headquarters, also decided to send by the same plane the urn containing Netaji's ashes, and



After closing the box, it was wrapped up in a white cloth. After wrapping the box in a white cloth, it was put round the neck of the Indian Adjutant, and we went by car to the Nishi (West) Honganji temple. That day a special ceremony was held at the temple."

Col. Habibur Rehman corroborates Major Nagatomo's version, but he does not give so much detail. Mr. Harin Shah had the advantage of not only visiting the crematorium in 1946, but he also had questioned the caretaker, Mr. Chu Tsang. He said that the coffin of Netaji was very big. It was brought to the crematorium at about 3 P.M. and it took 8 hours to burn. The Japanese Officers had paid the usual fee of 18 yens. The coffin was so big, that it could not be put in the chamber, and so the body had to be placed in a smaller coffin. According to Mr. Chu Tsang, it was he who had collected the ashes next morning, and put it into the usual wooden funeral urn. He told Mr. Harin Shah that one Indian, with his forearm bandaged, came in a car with some Japanese and took away the urn. He described the Indian as a tall person dressed in white with his forearm bandaged.

5. Here again, about the cremation, the evidence has come from two Japanese, one Indian (Pakistani), and one Formosan witness. Their stories closely corroborate each other. There is no reason why these witnesses of different origin should tell the same story, unless they themselves took part in the events they described. There has been no suggestion of disposal of Netaji's body in any other way but by cremation at the Taihoku Crematorium. The slight confusion caused by Southern Army Headquarters telegram, dated the 20th August, that the body had been flown to Tokyo, could be explained in two ways. First, their own explanation that the report regarding Netaji's body was flown to Tokyo, presumably with Col. Tada. Secondly, they might have been referring at that time to the first instruction, received from Imperial General Headquarters to fly the body to Tokyo, which was subsequently countermanded. It can be taken as well established that the body of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was burnt at Taihoku Crematorium, and his ashes were thereafter deposited at the Nishi Honganji temple in the same city. Thus dust returned to dust, and so little was left of so big a man.

6. An ordinary person reading the story from the beginning, from the flight from Saigon, to the deposit of the ashes in Nishi Honganji temple, cannot help feeling that things were not arranged in the best possible way. Netaji's requirement for air transport was modest. He only asked for passage for himself and six of his Advisers and Officers. It is not clear why this modest request could not be met. It is true that at that time, air passages were not easy to come by. Major Kono, for instance, who was on transfer to Tokyo, had to wait at Saigon for two weeks for his

passage. But then we have it from the evidence of Captain Nakamura alias Yamamoto that the flight of Japanese aircraft was restricted only after the 25th of August, i.e., 8 days after Netaji's departure from Saigon. Perhaps, it was not so difficult to arrange for 7 seats in an air transport. General Isoda, the Chief of the Japanese Liaison Mission, expected this to be provided, and was disappointed when he was informed to the contrary. Then, the plane itself was not probably in a particularly good state, as may be deduced from the fact that an engine had to be changed at Saigon. General Isayama, Chief of the General Staff, Formosan Army, has said that the engine of the plane was worn out. When the crash took place, it was dealt with in a somewhat casual manner. No officer of any standing came to the spot, although it is clear from the evidence of Staff Officer Major Nagatomo that information about the crash was received from the aerodrome immediately after it had occurred. The Chief of the General Staff of the Formosan Army, General Isayama, was candid enough to say that he learnt of the accident when he went to his office the next morning! And although Lt. Col. Nonogaki has stated that, on informing the Headquarters, some Staff Officers came while Netaji was alive, the Staff Officers themselves, namely, Col. Miyata and Major Nagatomo, say that they arrived after Netaji had died. Major Nagatomo says that immediately after receiving the information, General Ando, Commander of the Formosan Army, went to the hospital to see Netaji. He also says that General Ando attended the subsequent funeral ceremony at Nishi Honganji temple. General Isayama, Chief of the General Staff, who should know what the Army Commander was doing, gives a completely different story. He says that neither he nor General Ando went either to the hospital to pay respects to Netaji's body, or attended any funeral ceremony. He goes on to say that the Army Commander had shut himself up in his house from the day of surrender of Japan, and did not come out. In justification, he has said that they kept away so as not to give prominence to the fact that an important person like Netaji was fleeing to Tokyo. That explanation does not appear very convincing when he himself said that a week later he went and received Dr. Ba Maw, the Prime Minister of Burma, and General Tanaka, Chief of the General Staff, Burma Army, who were on their way to Tokyo. Apparently, no particular interest was taken by the local Army Command as to what happened to Netaji's body. A comparatively junior officer, a Major (Nagatomo), was detailed, and thereafter no further interest was apparently taken. General Isayama says, "I left the matter of disposal of Mr. Bose's ashes to my Staff Officer, and since I did not receive any report from him, I presume everything must have worked out smoothly." One would have at least expected a formal inquiry into the air crash, which is more or less



quarters was followed by a second telegram, asking them not to send the body to Tokyo, but to cremate it at Taihoku. No reason was given for this change of orders. Col. Habibur Rehman was told, on the 20th, that the body could not be transported by plane, because the coffin was too big to be carried in the small plane which the Japanese had. Formosa was hot in August, and it was the third day after the death. Finding no alternative, he had to agree to the cremation of the body at Taihoku. There is some discrepancy about the date of cremation. In his statement before us, Col. Habibur Rehman had given the date of cremation as 20th of August, but in a statement signed by him dated 24th August 1945 and handed to Mr. Murti, the date was given as 22nd August. Mr. J. Nakamura definitely gives the date as 20th August. Dr. Yoshimi says that so far as he could remember, it was the 20th, but he was not very sure. Major Nagatomo has not mentioned any definite date, but says that the cremation was done "on the same day, on receipt of the second telegram from the Imperial General Headquarters"—which appears to have been received on the 19th of August. It is unlikely that with so much argument, and change of orders, the body was cremated on the 19th, i.e., the date following the death. The cremation is more likely to have taken place sometime later.

3. The cremation was a simple and quiet ceremony. Although Col. Habibur Rehman says that the Hospital staff and a large number of others accompanied the cortege, this is not confirmed by Dr. Yoshimi, the doctor in charge of the Military Hospital. Dr. Yoshimi simply says, "The body was taken away from the Hospital by the Captain of the guard that was posted there on the 18th..... The coffin was placed in the truck and carried away." Major Nagatomo, who had been detailed by the Military Headquarters to make all necessary arrangements for the cremation and funeral of Netaji's body, says that the coffin was placed on a truck, with twelve soldiers, and ahead of it he went along in a car with the Indian Adjutant (Col. Habibur Rehman) and the Interpreter (Mr. Nakamura). The Interpreter, Mr. Nakamura, has given a detailed description as to what had happened at the crematorium. The crematorium was visited by Mr. Harin Shah. It was the Taihoku City Government Crematorium, and was reached after crossing the main Sun Yat-Sen Avenue. Mr. Harin Shah took some photographs of the crematorium both from inside and outside. Apart from the Japanese soldiers, persons definitely present at the cremation were:

- Col. Habibur Rehman,
- Major Nagatomo,
- Mr. J. Nakamura,
- a Buddhist priest, and
- the Crematorium Attendant, Mr. Chu Tsang.

The Committee has examined the first three. The Buddhist priest

and the Formosan attendant could not be examined, as we could not go to Formosa. Mr. Nakamura has given a detailed account of the crematorium, and what took place there. He says: "On arrival at the crematorium, the soldiers took up the coffin, and carried it to the furnace. The crematorium was a large-sized hall with a furnace in the middle. The hall, as far as I remember, was approximately 16 ft. by 16 ft. From the entrance to the hall, the soldiers carried the coffin on their shoulders, and placed it in the sliding tray in the furnace, and after closing the door of the furnace they came out, and told us that they had placed the coffin in position in the furnace. The soldiers went out, and we, who were waiting outside, went inside the hall. Col. Rehman was in the front. I was next to him. The other gentlemen, totalling about five, followed us. We went and stood in front of the furnace. All of us stayed there and saluted. After paying our respects, we went to the back side of the furnace where we found the priest standing with burning incense sticks (*aggarbattis*) in his hand. He wanted to hand over a stick to Col. Rehman but as he could not hold it, I took the stick and placed it in Col. Rehman's hands. Col. Rehman held it between the edge of his palms, since he could not hold it in his fingers, and placed it in the hole which was located at the rear of the furnace. I took the next incense stick and put it down in the same hole and everybody followed likewise. As we came out of the entrance of the crematorium, the caretaker told us to come there the following day, at about noon-time." The party came away after locking the door of the furnace. Both Col. Habibur Rehman and Major Nagatomo claim to have kept the key.

4. Next day, they again went to the crematorium to collect the ashes. Regarding collection of ashes, Major Nagatomo says:

"Next morning at about 8 A.M. I went to the hospital to take the Indian Adjutant with me. I went to the hospital in a car, and as far as I remember, the Interpreter was also with us on the next day. On arrival at the crematorium, I opened the lock of the furnace with the key that was with me, and pulled out the sliding plate. From the Headquarters I had taken with me a small wooden box about 8" cube. When we pulled out the plate on which the coffin had been put, we found that the whole skeleton had still retained its shape, but it was completely burnt. According to the Buddhist custom, I first picked a bone from the throat with two chop-sticks and placed it in the box. Then I picked a bone from every portion of his body and placed it in the box. The Indian Adjutant did the same after me. I do not remember about the Interpreter, whether he picked up the bones or not. In this way, the whole of the box was filled up. The lid of the box containing the bones was nailed but I am not quite sure whether it was nailed here, or in the temple.



told him that even before the crash of Netaji's plane, he knew that such a false story would be given out. This story was published in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Bengali) of Calcutta on 1st May 1951. While travelling in the Mishmi hills, some Mishmi headmen told Mr. Gupta that some of them had been taken by some Chinese officers, who were on their border, to see an Indian among them. They were shown a person who looked like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Mr. Gupta added that the Mishmis in question had not seen Netaji before, and he could not vouch for the truth of their story. Vague suggestions have appeared from time to time that Netaji was with the Chinese Army, or with the fighting Nagas, or that one day he would come to India at the head of an Army. To such suggestions, one can only quote from the historic speech Netaji delivered when he assumed charge of the Indian Independence Movement in Singapore on the 4th July 1943: "Even my enemies will not have the audacity to say that I can injure the interest of my country." (Page 79 in Major General A. C. Chatterjee's book *India's Struggle for Freedom*.)

## CHAPTER IV

## CREMATION OF NETAJI'S BODY

IMMEDIATELY after Netaji passed away, the Japanese present stood up and paid respects to his body by saluting. Col. Habibur Rehman was one of Netaji's most trusted officers, and had been especially chosen by Netaji to accompany him on this journey. Habibur Rehman was deeply affected by Netaji's death. The Interpreter, Nakamura, who was present at the death-bed, has graphically described how Col. Rehman prayed for the dead. At first he came and knelt by Netaji's bed, and prayed for five or six minutes. Then he opened the window and, looking at the sky, prayed for a longer time, and then slowly came to his bed and lay down. All present in the room were affected. Dr. Yoshimi says that tears were rolling down Col. Rehman's eyes. The nurses were crying loudly. Everybody present in the room was crying. In fact, describing this poignant scene before the Committee, Dr. Yoshimi himself broke down and sobbed audibly. Thereafter, Dr. Yoshimi informed the Military Headquarters of the sad event. Major Nagatomo was sent down from the Headquarters. He came and saw Netaji's body lying on the hospital bed swathed in bandages. The body was removed to one corner of the room, and a screen was put round it, and according to Japanese custom, flowers and candles were placed by its side. The changed position is shown in the sketches of the hospital furnished by Dr. Yoshimi and Col. Habibur Rehman. Major Nagatomo posted soldiers to guard the body.

2. Next day, i.e., on the 19th August, the Formosan Army Headquarters received a telegram from the Imperial General Headquarters that the body should be flown to Tokyo by plane. Accordingly, Major Nagatomo instructed Dr. Yoshimi to inject Formalene into the body to preserve it. On the same day, the body was put in a coffin which, according to Col. Habibur Rehman, was made of camphor-wood. Major Nagatomo says that he had lifted the lid of the coffin and seen Netaji's face. He says, "I saw Mr. Bose's face. It was a big round face." Col. Habibur Rehman also saw the body being put in the coffin. Meanwhile, Col. Habibur Rehman had been pressing the local Japanese Military authorities to arrange for the transport of the body, preferably to Singapore, or alternatively to Tokyo. On that day, i.e., on the 19th, some senior Military officers came to the Hospital, and expressed their regrets for the unfortunate accident and Netaji's demise. But the body was not transported by plane either to Singapore, or to Tokyo. According to Major Nagatomo, the first telegram from the Imperial General Head-



Japanese witnesses, were not. Yet they have corroborated each other. So the line of reasoning of this school cannot be accepted.

12. The other school claims that Netaji is not only alive, but people have seen him, and that he has appeared here and there, mainly in China, and also on the border of India and China. Mr. Muthuramalinga Thevar, M.L.A. (Madras), has issued press statements, from time to time, that he has been in contact with Netaji. He was the first witness to be called by the Committee. Although implored by the Committee, he would not part with his secret. He took the plea that he must first be satisfied that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was not on the list of War Criminals. When, on enquiry from the Government of India, he was told that the Government did not have any such list, he was still not satisfied. More than once Mr. Thevar stated that he belonged to a political party (Forward Bloc), and so he must view all things from a political angle. He was questioned about his press statements to which he replied significantly, "This is an Official Committee; that was a public affair." A person who is not prepared to stand by the statements he makes to the public and press, before an official Committee, cannot expect to be taken seriously. Mr. S. M. Goswami has produced a sensational pamphlet "Netaji Mystery Revealed". He gave evidence before the Committee in Calcutta, and claims that Netaji is alive. Apparently, his theory started in 1949, when he went to Germany, and met a certain gentleman, Herr Heins Von Have, who told him that Netaji was alive. Herr Have claimed to have been acquainted with Netaji. Mr. Goswami was questioned regarding Von Have. In reply, he said that when the plane crash took place, Von Have was in Tokyo. He was not sure whether he went to Formosa to enquire into the plane crash, or heard it from some German friends. These German friends, about whom no particulars are supplied, told Von Have that there had been no crash. Mr. Goswami did not go to Formosa. Such information can only be described as hearsay. Mr. Goswami has put forward several suggestions as to where Netaji was, or is—Soviet Russia, China and Mongolia. Mr. Goswami is prepared to hold that by stages Netaji, originally a Russian prisoner, became a Chinese Communist General, and subsequently a Mongolian Trade Union Delegate. But his main reliance is on pictures. Opposite page 8 of his pamphlet "Netaji Mystery Revealed" is a picture of Chinese Military Officers. The person sixth from the left is supposed to resemble Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Identity is very difficult to establish from such pictures, particularly when the persons appear in foreign uniforms. But the picture on which Mr. Goswami pinned his faith was that of the visit of the Mongolian Trade Delegation to Peking in 1952, which came to his hand in 1955, in a book published by the

Workers' Press, Peking. He has enlarged the picture appearing on page 4 of that booklet, and submitted it to the Committee. He holds the third figure from the left has a striking resemblance to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The difficulty about identifying a person from a random picture has been mentioned. It might be stated here, without any suggestion of flippancy, that cinema films of historical characters, such as Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda, are produced now and again. Those who wish to be cast for such roles are called for interview by the producer, and quite a number appear bearing a close resemblance. But the actor who appears on the screen as Swami Vivekananda is really an entirely different person from the original. In any case, that picture of the Mongolian Delegation was sent to the Indian Embassy, Peking, for identification. The Foreign Office of the People's Republic of China has stated after enquiry that the photo was of a Chinese gentleman, Mr. Lee Ke Hung, Medical Superintendent of the Peking University Medical College. A copy of the telegram conveying the information will be found in Annexure I. In his enthusiasm, Mr. Goswami appeared before the Committee for the second time. He was questioned further about the Mongolian Delegate. The questions and answers are given below:

"Question: How did you come to know about the activities of this particular Mongolian Delegate?

Reply: From the statement of Lt. N. B. Das made through the press.

Question: How did Lt. Das come to know of the whereabouts of the Mongolian Delegate?

Reply: It is up to him to answer."

In this connection it may be stated that a certain person claiming to be Lt. N. B. Das appeared, and deposed before the Committee. Mr. Debnath Das, who was an Adviser to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, wrote a letter about this person to the Chairman of the Committee which reads as follows: "It appeared in the press that one Lt. N. B. Das gave evidence to the Commission. Das was a Havildar attached to Col. P. N. Dutta and was at Zawabudy, Central Burma, when the Allied troops took Burma. He was not a Security Officer. He was not stationed at Bangkok as was reported."

The value of information gleaned from such a source cannot be high, and the theories built by Mr. Goswami on such hearsay cannot carry much weight.

13. One responsible person who suggested that Netaji might be alive, is Mr. A. K. Gupta, Joint Editor of the *Hindusthan Standard*. Mr. Gupta said that in 1951 he undertook a tour in the hill areas of Assam. There he met Mr. Phizo, the Naga leader. Mr. Phizo



Mountbatten's Headquarters at Kandy, through Col. F. G. Figgess, at that time attached to General MacArthur's Headquarters at Tokyo, about Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. This enquiry was handled by an American Intelligence Officer working under G.H.Q., SCAP (Supreme Commander, Allied Powers). The conclusion reached from these reports was that Netaji had died of burns at Taipeh as a result of the air crash.

9. In August 1946, i.e., the year after the events, Mr. Harin Shah, an Indian journalist, visited Formosa at the invitation of the Chiang Kai-shek Government. There he took up enquiry on his own about Netaji. Mr. Shah came across a number of Formosans who had something to say as to what happened to Netaji at Taihoku. He met some medical students, who had heard that Netaji had been severely injured as a result of the air crash, and that a Japanese medical student donated blood for transfusion. He also examined at length a Formosan nurse, Sister Tsan Pi Sha, who said that she was in attendance on Netaji at the Nanmon Military Hospital. She gave correct descriptions of Netaji and Col. Habibur Rehman. In the end, she said that Netaji had died at the hospital at 11 at night. It has already been stated that the Committee had not been able to visit Formosa, much as they would have liked to, on account of the fact that there was no diplomatic connection between our Government and the authorities in Formosa. Mr. Harin Shah's evidence is, therefore, all the more valuable, as it was taken on the spot, soon after the time of the occurrence. He was satisfied on the strength of his enquiries that Netaji had died at Taihoku as a result of the air accident.

10. It will thus be seen that the evidence given by witnesses before us as to Netaji's death is corroborated by the findings of British and American Intelligence organisations who undertook independent enquiries very soon after the occurrence, and the conclusions of an unofficial enquiry conducted a year later by an Indian journalist. As for the witnesses who have deposed before us, neither from their antecedents, nor from the manner in which they made their statements, has the Committee any reason to disbelieve their stories. These witnesses are of different nationalities. Some were Japanese, Col. Habibur Rehman, an Indian (now a Pakistani), and Col. Figgess, an Englishman. They were unconnected with each other and came from different walks of life. There is absolutely no reason why they should come and depose to something which they know to be untrue. The Japanese witnesses came from all over Japan—some of them at much personal loss and inconvenience. For instance, Dr. Yoshimi, who owns a medical clinic at Miyasakiken in Kyushi Island, had to close down his clinic for several days and come to Tokyo, a distance about 1,200 kilometres from his place. The Japanese Foreign Office had themselves conducted an enquiry

into the matter sometime ago, and had suggested the names of some witnesses who might give us information. But Japan is not a totalitarian country and the mere fact that some names were suggested by the Japanese Foreign Office need not necessarily mean that they were compelled to tell any particular story. It may be added that the Committee examined a much larger number of witnesses than originally suggested by the Japanese Foreign Office. These witnesses were either called for by the Committee, or they themselves volunteered, in response to a newspaper notice, issued by the Committee. Most of the Japanese witnesses are not now connected with the Government of Japan, and are in no way obliged to give evidence according to any particular brief. In fact, as will be seen, different witnesses have given different stories, which would disprove any suggestion of "promoting". So, notwithstanding discrepancies and variations, which are only too likely after the lapse of so many years, the statements of witnesses must be taken as worthy of credit. These statements are corroborated by enquiries through military and non-official channels soon after the events. They all point to the fact that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died at Taihoku Military Hospital on the night of the 18th August 1945. We accept this conclusion. In a way, the sudden and dramatic death fits in with the dynamic character of that national leader and patriot, Subhas Chandra Bose. In General Shidei's service record, the cause of his death is shown as death by war. The same was true of Netaji, only in his case it was a different war, the war for the independence of India. His war was continuing. He was only changing over from one battle-field to another—from South-East Asia to Manchuria.

11. Against this mass of evidence that Netaji had died as a result of the plane crash, there are some who hold that he is alive. Those who believe this are again divided into two schools. The first, mainly consisting of certain members of the Bose family, believe that although Netaji is alive, nobody is in touch with him, and for reasons of his own, he is in hiding, and will reappear in India at a time chosen by him. The best spokesman of this school was Mr. Aurobindo Bose. According to him, Netaji was a master planner, as he had planned his last escape so well, that nobody could find his clues. The Japanese Government helped him to escape, and they have, therefore, put out an elaborate deception story which is supported by Japanese witnesses. As for Col. Habibur Rehman, he is bound by an oath of secrecy and his injuries are faked. These are largely presumptions. As has been stated before, there is a great deal of evidence that the plane had crashed and Netaji had died. There is no reason to disbelieve the numerous witnesses belonging to Japanese and other nations. From medical evidence it appears clear that the injuries of Col. Rehman were genuine. If he was under any oath of secrecy, surely the others, particularly the



crash gradually came to believe it.

7. Not only were the Japanese initially secretive, and delayed in publishing the news, but no convincing proof of the death of Netaji was produced before the Indians in South-East Asia. Some pictures were taken two days later after the death, one of which shows Col. Habibur Rehman keeping vigil, and another shows a sheet covering some object. From these photographs (copies in Annexure II) the dead person cannot be identified. Dr. Yoshimi has said that it was against Japanese custom to photograph dead bodies. Col. Habibur Rehman has said that he did not allow Netaji's face to be photographed as it had swollen, and was disfigured. Neither were any of his personal belongings shown as having been recovered at that time. There has been a certain amount of controversy about the watch Col. Habibur Rehman brought with him, which was later handed over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the late Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji. It was a rectangular watch. Col. Habibur Rehman has stated that it was handed over to him by Dr. Yoshimi as belonging to Netaji, but Dr. Yoshimi said that he did not remember anything about it. Most of the pictures of Netaji show him wearing a round wrist watch. His personal valet Kundan Singh also confirms that he habitually wore a round wrist watch. On the other hand, it is a fact that Netaji carried in his baggage a number of watches of different kinds, including rectangular ones, which were given to him as gifts on different occasions. Some rectangular watches in a damaged condition are in the collection of articles salvaged from Taihoku Airfield, now lying in the National Museum at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi, which was inspected by the Committee. The point about the watch remains inconclusive. It may be stated here that these salvaged articles were shown to Netaji's valet Kundan Singh, who was with Netaji from his arrival in Singapore till his departure from Bangkok on 17th August 1945. Kundan Singh identified a number of articles as belonging to Netaji, such as a gold cigarette case studded with precious stones presented by Herr Hitler, a cigarette-lighter, a paper-knife used for manicuring, and an oval *supari* box made of gold. The question of valuables carried by Netaji will be examined later. The point that is being made here is that owing to the secrecy, delay in publishing the news, and not bringing forward proofs of Netaji's death by the Japanese authorities, many people were led honestly to doubt that Netaji had died. It is probable that in normal times such delays and omissions would not have arisen, and that things were out of gear after the Japanese surrender on the 15th of August 1945.

8. Soon after the end of hostilities, the Government of India sent two parties of Intelligence officers (police) headed by Messrs. Finney and Davies to the Far East to enquire about the whereabouts

of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and if possible, to arrest him. Two Indian police officers who were in those parties, Mr. H. K. Roy and Mr. K. P. De, appeared before us and gave evidence. Mr. H. K. Roy worked in Mr. Davies' party and proceeded first to Saigon, and then to Taihoku in September 1945. He says that they interviewed the Japanese Military Officer in charge of Saigon Aerodrome, and obtained a list of the passengers of the plane. It was the only plane which left Saigon on the 17th August 1945. The last two names in that list were Chandra Bose and H. Rehman. At Taihoku, they interrogated some officers connected with the aerodrome. They said that the plane had crashed on the 18th August, and caught fire, and as a result, Netaji who had been badly burnt, was taken to the hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries the same night. They added that Col. Habibur Rehman had also received injuries, and that a number of Japanese officers had been killed or injured. Mr. Davies also examined the medical officer in charge of the Hospital, who confirmed the death of Netaji. The conclusion of the police officers was that Netaji had died as a result of air crash, and they reported to the Government of India accordingly. Mr. H. K. Roy who helped Mr. Finney to write the report states that the report was definite that Netaji was dead, and thereafter the Government of India withdrew the warrant of arrest against Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The Bangkok party seized a telegraphic message conveying the information that the plane carrying Netaji had crashed at Taipeh, on the 18th August, and that Netaji had expired on the same day. The telegram in question, Signal 66, dated 20th August, from the Chief of Staff, Southern Army, to O.C., Hikari Kikan, is reproduced below:

"To OC KIKAN

FROM Chief of Staff, Southern Army, Staff II.

Signal 66, 20th August.

'TOP SECRET'

"T, while on his way to the capital, as a result of an accident to his aircraft at TAIHOKU at 1400 hours on the 18th was seriously injured and died at midnight on the same date. His body has been flown to TOKYO by the Formosan Army."

(Mr. 'T' as already stated, was code name for Netaji.) On being questioned, the discrepancy about the body was sought to be clarified by saying that the statement regarding Netaji's death, and not his body, was flown to Tokyo. Col. Tada was specially brought down from Tokyo to Saigon for questioning on this point. A parallel enquiry was conducted about the same time at the instance of the Director of Military Intelligence, India, or Admiral Lord



they should be taken care of, when they came to Formosa. The second time he said that he felt that blood was rushing to his head. This is partly corroborated by Lt. Col. Nonogaki who claims to have stood by Netaji's bed and talked to him. During all this time, Netaji must have been in very great pain, but not a word of complaint or groan escaped his lips. His stoic calm impressed the Japanese witnesses greatly. J. Nakamura says: "During all this time, not a word of complaint, either of pain or suffering, came from his lips. The Japanese officers at the other end of the room were groaning with pain, and crying out that they may be killed rather than continue to endure their suffering. This composure of Netaji surprised all of us."

5. Dr. Yoshimi has stated that at about 7 or 7-30 P.M. he was informed by Dr. Tsuruta that Netaji's condition had deteriorated and his pulse was very weak. He hurried and gave Netaji injections of Vita-camphor and Digitamine. In spite of administering stimulants, his heart and pulse beat did not improve. Slowly his life ebbed away. Shortly after 8 P.M. he breathed his last. He made out a medical certificate of death in respect of the deceased, writing his name in Japanese (Kata Kana) as "Chandra Bose" and giving the cause of death as "burns of third degree". The following persons were present at his bedside at the time of Netaji's death: Dr. Yoshimi, Dr. Tsuruta, two nurses, Col. Habibur Rehman, Mr. Nakamura (Interpreter), and one Military Policeman. According to Kazo Mitsui, a medical orderly, he was also present. According to Dr. Tsuruta, the time was about 7 or 8 P.M. Col. Habibur Rehman gave the time as 9 P.M.—six hours after the crash. It may be stated here that in a brief statement made by Dr. Yoshimi in 1946, when he was in Stanley Jail in Hong Kong, he gave the time as 11 P.M., and according to the telegram sent by the Chief of Staff, Southern Army, to O.C., Hikari Kikan, on the 20th August 1945, which was recovered by British Military Intelligence, the death took place at midnight. This was repeated in the first publication of the news on the 23rd of August 1945 by the Japanese Domei Agency. The evidence of the fellow injured persons does not help to establish the correct hour. Lt. Col. Nonogaki and Major Kono had stated that they were removed to the second hospital the same night. Major Takahashi could only say that Netaji expired the same night. Only Captain Arai said that he heard from a nurse at about 10 P.M. that Netaji had expired. So, the time of death cannot be established with accuracy; it could be any time between 8 P.M. and midnight on the 18th August 1945.

6. One of the reasons why many people cast doubt on the fact that Netaji was dead, was the manner in which the news was made known. For reasons not very clear, the Japanese authorities maintained a great deal of secrecy about it. Presumably, it was partly due to reasons of security. Even in their official correspondence

between one Commander and another, Netaji was referred to by the Japanese as Mr. "T". In the Secret Telegram, dated the 20th August 1945, from the Chief of Southern Army to O.C., Hikari Kikan, it was definitely stated that secrecy is to be maintained. The Interpreter, J. Nakamura, says that the news about Netaji's death was kept a secret and known only to high-ranking Military Officers. General Isayama, Chief of the General Staff, Formosan Army, had tried to justify this hush-hush policy by saying that they did not want to make the news public, that an important person like Netaji, who had taken a prominent part against the British for the liberation of India, was fleeing to Tokyo. General Bhonsle says that the news about Netaji was promptly communicated to him at Bangkok in a series of telegrams. But Sardar Ishar Singh, who was the Adviser to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and Chairman of the Thai Territorial Committee of the Indian Independence League, says that the news about Netaji's plane crash and death was communicated by Japanese Military authorities three or four days after Netaji had left Bangkok, that is to say, on the 20th or 21st of August 1945. Those of Netaji's party who were left behind at Saigon did not get any news about him during the time they were there, i.e., till the 20th of August, although it was the Headquarters of the Southern Army, and a part of the time General Isoda was there and in possession of the all important information. The news was broken to Mr. S. A. Ayer by Lt. Col. Tada, who was flying with him to Tokyo, on the afternoon of the 20th at Canton. Mr. Debnath Das and others who went on to Hanoi, learnt of the tragedy only from the radio broadcast from Tokyo. It was given out on the 23rd August. Then there was the curious incident narrated by Mr. Debnath Das that a couple of days later, a Japanese Staff Officer came and told him that the plane crash was just a story, and they were not to believe it, but to go on acting according to their plan. Col. Pritam Singh was told of this by Mr. Debnath Das. Next month Mr. Debnath Das went underground. There were some other persons in Bangkok whom Netaji had already instructed, just before he left Bangkok, to go underground and keep touch with him by wireless. Some small arms, ammunition and wireless transmitter were handed over to two men, Mr. A. C. Das and Mr. Sunil Roy. Mr. Das was examined by the Committee at Bangkok. He said that when he heard the news of the crash, he like others did not believe it. But although Mr. Sunil Roy had the wave-length, frequency, call signs, etc., to contact Netaji, he tried in vain to contact him. They gave up the attempt after 10 days, and believed that the plane had indeed crashed with Netaji. Mr. Debnath Das came to the surface in May 1946, in Bangkok, but could give no news about Netaji's continued existence to Mr. A. C. Das. So most of those who originally doubted the story of the plane



severely burnt all over his body, and all of it had taken on a greyish colour like ash. Even his heart had burns. His face was swollen. In my opinion, his burns were of the severest type, i.e., of the third degree. There was no injury on his body from which blood came out. His eyes were also swollen. He could see, but had difficulty in opening them. He was in his senses when he was brought in. He was in high fever; his temperature was 39° centigrade. His pulse rate was 120 per minute. The condition of his heart was also weak." Dr. Yoshimi has stated that after examination of Netaji, his impression was that his condition was so serious that he was not likely to survive till the next morning. He says that Netaji's burns were caused by splashing of petrol. After examining Netaji and treating him, Dr. Yoshimi examined and treated the other injured persons. Netaji was not the only person who received severe burns. W/O Ayoagi, the Co-pilot, suffered similar burns over his shoulders. His forearms were also burnt and the legs below his knees were also burnt. All these were caused by splashing of petrol. Major Kono had third-degree burns on his hands. Col. Sakai had burns on his hands. Only Lt. Col. Nonogaki did not have any burn or injury. Dr. Yoshimi has stated that Col. Habibur Rehman had burns on one side of his face and on his opposite hand. He also had a cut on his right temple.

3. Dr. Yoshimi has given details of the treatment given to Netaji. Initially Netaji's burns were dressed by Dr. Tsuruta who applied a white ointment and bandaged him all over. Dr. Yoshimi gave for his heart, one after the other, four injections of Vita-camphor and two injections of Digitamine. He also gave him three intravenous injections of Ringer-solution, 500 c.c. each. The treatment was given initially in the dressing room, and then Netaji was removed to the attached ward No. 2 where further treatment was carried on. Different witnesses have given different versions of the room in which the initial treatment was given. Dr. Yoshimi has given a sketch plan of the Hospital showing the ward where Netaji lay. There is some discrepancy between the witnesses as to who were in the same ward with Netaji. According to the two doctors, only Netaji and Col. Habibur Rehman were there. Col. Rehman says that a third person, probably a pilot, was also there. Sketch plans of the Hospital and Netaji's ward were also submitted by Dr. Tsuruta and Col. Habibur Rehman. Major Takahashi and Major Kono have said that Netaji was in a separate room, while Lt. Col. Nonogaki has stated that all the injured persons including Netaji were taken to one room, while he himself was in another room. The Interpreter, J. Nakamura, has stated that in addition to Netaji and Col. Habibur Rehman, there were three other Japanese officers in the same ward. After the lapse of years, it would perhaps be unwise to lay too much

stress on such minor discrepancies, made by persons, many of whom were themselves seriously injured. It would be more reasonable to accept the statement of the two doctors that only Netaji and Col. Rehman were kept in one room. Dr. Yoshimi has stated that in the case of severe burns of third degree, the blood gets thicker, and there is high pressure on the heart. In order to relieve this pressure, blood is usually let out and new blood given in its place. Approximately 200 c.c. of Netaji's blood was let out and a blood transfusion to the extent of 400 c.c. was given to him. Dr. Yoshimi has said that this blood was obtained from a Japanese soldier in the Nanmon Military Hospital and was given between 4 and 5 P.M. that day. There is a little difference here between this and the evidence of Mr. Harin Shah, an Indian journalist, who had the chance to enquire into this matter locally, in Formosa, in 1946. According to Mr. Shah, the blood was donated by a Japanese medical student. A more serious discrepancy is the statement of Dr. Tsuruta, who attended on Netaji, that no blood transfusion was given. Col. Rehman who was also in the same ward room could not remember if any blood transfusion was given to Netaji. There is no way of reconciling these different statements and they must remain as they are. Then Sulfonamide injection was also given to Netaji to prevent infection. Netaji's initial reaction to this treatment was favourable. Col. Habibur Rehman's injuries were also treated with ointment and disinfectant and bandaged. Thereafter, Dr. Yoshimi left, to attend the Japanese injured officers, with instructions to Dr. Tsuruta to look after Netaji and give him Vita-camphor injection at 30 minutes' interval. Except the point regarding blood transfusion, Dr. Tsuruta's evidence corroborates that of Dr. Yoshimi's. As stated previously, none of the nurses could be examined. One Kazo Mitsui, a medical orderly, at that time at the Nanmon Military Hospital, came on his own, and gave evidence and said that he had helped the doctor attending on Netaji by bringing medicines, etc.

4. Netaji was conscious at the beginning, and occasionally asked for water, a little of which was given each time. An interpreter was called in, so that Netaji could speak to the Japanese personnel if he so desired. In addition to the doctors, some nurses were also attending on Netaji. According to Col. Habibur Rehman, Netaji was taken to the "operation theatre", and given a white transfusion which he thought was camphor. The Japanese doctors did not refer to the operation theatre. In any case, since there was no surgical operation, it was not necessary to take him there. Perhaps, Col. Habibur Rehman was thinking of the dressing room attached to the ward. According to Col. Habibur Rehman, Netaji asked for water once or twice, and asked once whether Hasan was there. According to the Interpreter, Nakamura, Netaji spoke three times. The first time he said that some of his men were following him, and



Lt. Col. T. Sakai (1) who was away from Japan. As stated previously, a written statement was obtained from him through the Japanese Foreign Office. Attempts were made to trace Sergeant Okishta (6), but he was not found.

## CHAPTER III

## DEATH OF NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

Thus, Netaji was carried along with other injured persons to Nanmon Military Hospital, Taihoku. This was a small hospital, and had four general wards with accommodation for 80 patients, and 15 more in the infectious ward. As a precaution against air raids, the main Hospital and its several branches were removed to outer areas. The Nanmon Branch was the only one left in Taihoku city, where patients received first-aid treatment before being sent to other hospitals. The Medical Officer in charge of this branch was Captain T. Yoshimi who had graduated in 1938 and was commissioned in 1940. There was another doctor, Dr. T. Tsuruta, who had qualified only in 1944. There was also a third doctor. The other staff consisted of half a dozen Japanese and Formosan nurses and 30 medical orderlies. The Committee examined both Dr. Yoshimi and Dr. Tsuruta. None of the Japanese nurses could be traced. A Formosan nurse, Tsan Pi Sha, who had made an important statement before an Indian journalist, Mr. Harin Shah of *Indian Free Press Journal*, in 1946, could not be examined as the Committee did not find it possible to visit Formosa. At 2 P.M. on the 18th August 1945, Dr. Yoshimi received a telephone message from the Taihoku Aerodrome to be ready to receive a number of persons injured in an air accident. Sometime later, a dozen injured persons, including Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose were admitted into the hospital. There is some discrepancy between the witnesses, as to who travelled in which vehicles, and who arrived first. But these are minor points and may be overlooked. When Netaji was taken to the hospital, most of the witnesses have said that he was without any clothes on him, but there are others who say that he came partly covered. A Military Officer identified the big-built foreigner as the Indian leader Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. His Adjutant, Col. Habibur Rehman, was also admitted at the same time.

2. When he was brought in, Netaji's condition was the most serious, but such was his magnanimity that he told the doctors to attend to the others first, and to him last. In view, however, of his condition, the doctors attended to him first. Eye-witnesses, both medical and non-medical, have said that Netaji was burnt all over, and his skin had taken on a dark colour, but none of them mentioned any cut injury. Col. Habibur Rehman has said that Netaji had a cut on his head 4 inches long which was bleeding. This is a discrepancy.

Netaji was examined by Dr. Yoshimi who says, "I found that he was

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with him, but it is not certain who they were. Most likely Major Takizawa, Chief Pilot, was one of them. The rest, passengers and crew numbering about a dozen, were removed within a short time to Nanmon (South Gate) Military Hospital which was a few kilometres away, in motor vehicles, trucks, cars, and a peculiar vehicle, called "Shidosha" in Japanese, which was used for starting aeroplane propellers.

17. Before going on with the story of medical treatment in the hospital, account may conveniently be taken here regarding the air crash—whether the crash took place, its cause, and whether there could be any survivor. From the evidence given to the Committee, there is sufficient material to believe that the plane carrying Netaji crashed at Taihoku Airfield early in the afternoon of the 18th August 1945. There is no reason to disbelieve the large number of witnesses, both Japanese and non-Japanese. There is no evidence before us to show that the plane in question did not crash at Taihoku. Unfortunately, no formal enquiry into the air crash was carried out by the Japanese authorities at that time. General Isayama, Chief of the General Staff of the Formosan Army in 1945, was asked about this matter. He first said that since the aeroplane in question did not belong to the Formosan Army, the Headquarters of the Formosan Army had no responsibility to hold an enquiry into the matter. Then he said that it was the duty of the Commander, within whose area an air crash took place, to enquire into, and report it to the higher authorities. He said that in this case, a report was submitted to the Imperial General Headquarters by his Staff Officer, Lt. Col. Shibuya, through him. Lt. Col. Shibuya, who was also examined, denied knowledge of any such enquiry, and said that the responsibility of holding it lay entirely with the Air Division concerned. This matter was pursued further by the Committee and a report was obtained from the Japanese Foreign Office to confirm that no official enquiry was held into the air crash by the Japanese authorities (Annexure I). One would have expected a formal enquiry into the air crash as it involved two important personalities like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Lt. Gen. Shidei. Perhaps, there was disorganisation following the surrender of Japan on the 15th of August. We referred the available evidence regarding the plane, its condition and the crash, to the Director General of Civil Aviation, Government of India, on our return to Delhi, after placing on record the evidence of Japanese witnesses. The Director General of Civil Aviation had these papers examined by an expert, and the Committee recorded the opinion of Mr. A. M. N. Sastri, an Aircraft Inspector, Accidents Investigation Branch, regarding the accident and its cause. Shri Sastri's opinion was:

"From the statement of witnesses, sketches and photographs, it

appears that the aircraft crashed, and after the take-off, within the boundary of the aerodrome. The maximum height attained by the plane might have been anything up to 150 feet. The initial cause of the plane falling to the ground, according to the statement of witnesses, is the breaking away of the propeller and then the engine on the left-hand side. It is not possible to establish the exact cause as to how the propeller came off from the engine from the details available. In the absence of details of construction of the engine and the various control systems, and the maintenance records, and without examining the wreckage, it is not possible to trace the exact defect causing the crash. As observed by Major Kono, one of the witnesses, the engine seems to have been defective and over-speeding at the time of the take-off from Saigon. This appears to have something to do with the crash."

Regarding the effect of the crash and chances of survival, Mr. Sastri has said, "Taking into consideration the starting point of the fire to be from the star-board front as stated by Major Kono and the location of the petrol tank and also the inadequacy of emergency provision, it may be stated that

- (1) those who were in the front could be the worst sufferers;
- (2) those who were in the centre left could be seriously injured; and
- (3) those who were in the rear could have chances of survival."

He went on to elucidate: "In case of air accident, the survival of passengers or members of the crew is purely a matter of luck. I have come across accidents where in major crashes the occupants survived, whereas in similar accidents they died. It is very difficult to predict anything accurately as far as the survival of passengers in an aircraft accident is concerned."

18. From the evidence given by eye-witnesses and the opinion of the expert, it is established that there was an aircraft accident at Taihoku on the 18th August 1945 due to some kind of engine trouble, the cause of which cannot be established clearly in the absence of data. As for survivors, there is nothing surprising that seven out of the 13 or 14 persons on board the ill-fated plane survived. It is not a fact that Col. Habibur Rehman alone survived to tell the tale. So far as has been ascertained, the following persons survived:

- (1) Lt. Col. T. Sakai,
- (2) Lt. Col. S. Nonogaki,
- (3) Major T. Kono,
- (4) Major I. Takahashi,
- (5) Captain K. Arai,
- (6) Sergeant Okishta, and
- (7) Col. Habibur Rehman.

Of these survivors, the Committee could not examine in person



after a lapse of more than ten years. Later on, even my nails came off. The nail of the left thumb has not come up properly."

(NOTE.—The members of the Committee examined the hands and saw marks of severe burns. Marks of burns were also noticed on the right side of the face and just near the right ear. Injury marks were also seen on the forehead and right leg.)

"When I laid Netaji on the ground, I myself lay by his side. I was feeling acute pain and felt exhausted. I saw a Japanese passenger about 20 yards away bleeding profusely and moaning. Just then, Netaji enquired from me in Hindustani: *Aap Ko Ziada To Nahin Lagi?* (Hope you have not been hurt badly.) I replied, 'I feel that I will be all right.' About himself he said that he felt that he would not survive. I replied, 'Oh! No, God will spare you. I am sure you will be all right.' He said, 'No, I don't think so.' He used these words:

"When you go back to the country, tell the people that up to the last I have been fighting for the liberation of my country; they should continue to struggle, and I am sure India will be free before long. Nobody can keep India in bondage now."

(*Jab Apney Mulk Wapis Jayen To Mulki Bhaiyon Ko Batana Ki Men Akhri Dam Tak Mulk Ki Azadi Key Liyay Larta Raha Hoon; Woh Jange Azadi Ko Jari Rakhen. Hindustan Zaroor Azad Hoga, Us Ko Koi Gulam Nahin Rakh Sakta.*)"

In a way this was Netaji's last testament and very characteristic of him. It was in keeping with the oath he took to fight for the independence of India till his last breath when he established the Provisional Government of Azad Hind on 21st October 1943.

15. Lt. Col. Sakai and Captain Arai do not mention that they had seen Netaji immediately after the crash. Lt. Col. Nonogaki did. He says, "When I first saw Netaji after the plane crash, he was standing somewhere near the left tip of the left wing of the plane. His clothes were on fire and his Assistant was trying to take off his coat. He took off Netaji's coat quickly but was finding difficulty in taking off the woollen sweater. Since Netaji was sitting very near the petrol tank, he was splashed all over with petrol. It seemed that all his body was on fire." Major Kono says that he saw Netaji standing very near the plane facing away from it. He was standing erect with his legs apart and arms stretched downwards with clenched fists. He was completely naked and was wearing only his shoes. He did not see any fire on his body. Major Kono goes on to say that while he himself was feeling the heat of the flames 30 metres away, Netaji who was standing a couple of metres away from them seemed to be oblivious of the heat. His face did not show any sign of pain. Then Col. Habibur Rehman moved him away from the burning plane.

Major Takahashi gives a somewhat different version. He says that he saw Netaji getting out from the left front portion of the plane. His clothes were on fire and he was trying to take off his coat. Then he says that he (Major Takahashi) went up to Netaji and made him roll on the ground and managed to put out the fire from his clothes. He says that Col. Habibur Rehman was there, but assigns him a passive role. He goes on to say that petrol had splashed only on certain parts of Netaji's clothes and only those patches were burnt. His trousers were burnt only slightly. While other witnesses have said that Netaji had to take off his clothes and was naked, Major Takahashi says that Netaji had his clothes on. As for Netaji's clothes being on fire, all the eye-witnesses who had seen him agree. As for who helped to put out the fire, it seems much more likely that Col. Habibur Rehman should have been the man to have come to the aid of his leader. The version given by Col. Habibur Rehman and supported by the two more observant witnesses, namely, Lt. Col. Nonogaki and Major Kono appears more credible than the version of Major Takahashi. The Ground Engineer Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto has given a completely different version. He also says that Netaji's clothes were splashed with petrol and had to be stripped, but he claims that it was he (Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto) who rescued the passengers from the burning plane, and specially Netaji. This version is completely uncorroborated by anybody else, and may perhaps be put down to confused recollection after such a lapse of time.

16. Of the other Japanese inside the plane, passengers and crew, General Shidei could not get out and died inside the plane. It may be of interest to mention that a copy of General Shidei's service record (translated in English) was obtained through the Japanese Foreign Office, a copy of which is enclosed (Annexure I). It will be seen that the date of his death was 18th August 1945 at Taihoku Airfield. The cause is given as death by war. His ashes were sent to Tokyo a week later through General Tanaka, Chief of General Staff, Burma Army, who passed through Taihoku a week later en route to Tokyo with Dr. Ba Maw, President of Burma. Some of the crew were apparently rescued. There is some doubt about the fate of the two pilots and some of the crew who were initially trapped inside the plane. Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto definitely says that Pilot Takizawa and Co-pilot Ayoagi perished along with General Shidei, and he helped to bury their entrails and put their ashes in three boxes. But Major Kono says that he heard that Co-pilot Ayoagi had been pulled out. The two Doctors, Yoshimi and Tsuruta, definitely say that they had treated Co-pilot Ayoagi who died later in the hospital. From all this it would appear that General Shidei died instantaneously. One or two others also died

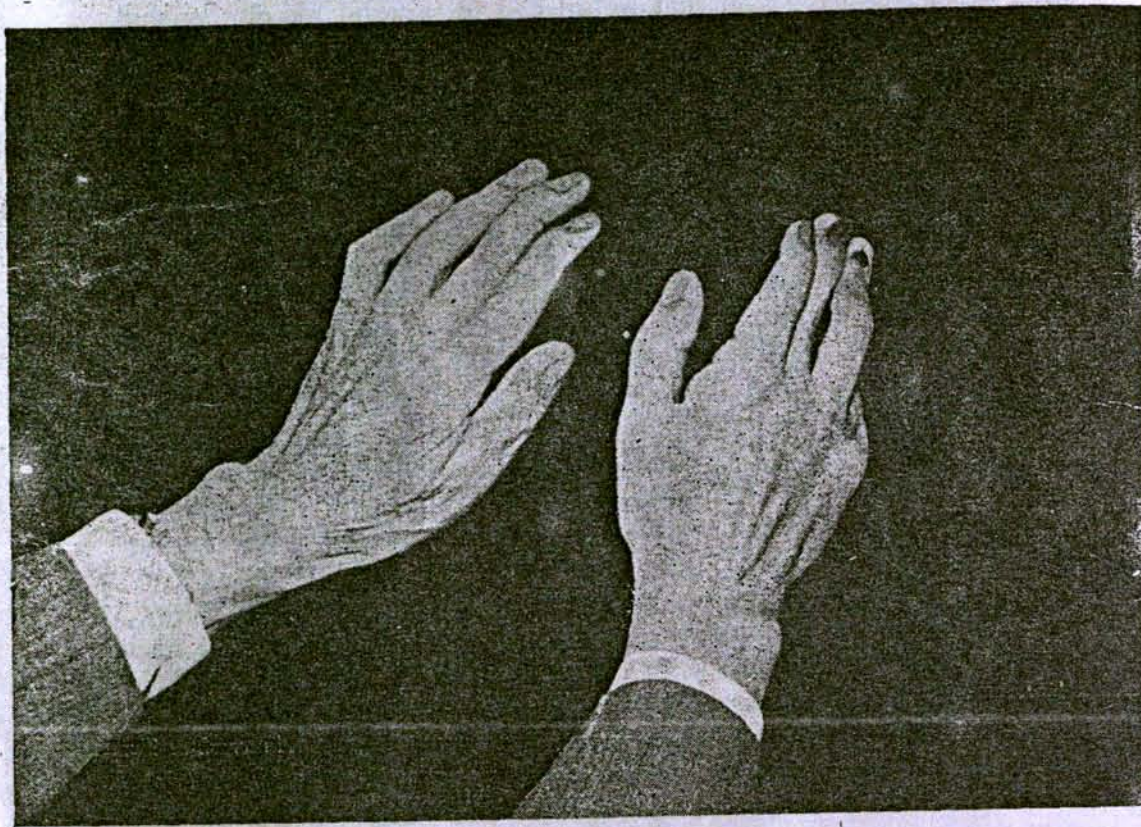


down. The petrol which was so splashed caught fire. I ran about 30 metres and then rolled on the ground and put out the fire; at the same time, I also took off my outer garment which had caught fire. In this way, I managed to put out the fire that was burning on me."

It may be mentioned here that Major Kono was under treatment for 18 months, and even after the protracted treatment the skin of his face looked severely burnt when he appeared before the Committee 11 years after. He lost all his teeth and wore false teeth. Four of the fingers of his right hand, i.e., excepting the thumb, were damaged and misshapen, and he could not clinch his right fist. The little finger of the left hand was also damaged and he could not clinch that fist in full. Both his hands were deformed. A picture of Major Kono's pair of hands was taken. They tell their own story.

14. Now we come to Col. Habibur Rehman and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. An extract from the statement of Col. Habibur Rehman as to what happened to him and Netaji immediately after the crash is given below in extenso:

"Within a few seconds, the plane crashed on the ground, and fore-portion of the plane split and caught fire. Netaji turned towards me. I said, 'Please get out through the front: there is no way in the rear.' (*Augey Say Nikaleay, Pichay Say Rasta Nahin Hay*). We could not get through the entrance door as it was all blocked and jammed by packages and other things. So Netaji got out through the fire; actually he rushed through the fire. I followed him through the same flames. The moment I got out, I saw him about 10 yards ahead of me, standing, looking in the opposite direction to mine towards the west. His clothes were on fire. I rushed and I experienced great difficulty in unfastening his bush-shirt belt. His trousers were not so much on fire and it was not necessary to take them off. He was not wearing the sweater. He was wearing khaki drill. I laid him down on the ground and noticed a very deep cut on his head, probably on the left side. His face had been scorched by heat and his hair had also caught fire and singed. The cut in his head was a long one, about 4 inch. I tried to stop his bleeding by handkerchief. As for myself, both my hands were very badly burnt. As I came through the fire, the right side of my face was burnt and I noticed I had received a cut in the forehead which was bleeding and the right side of my right knee was also bleeding profusely, as it had hit some hard substance. The head cut was caused by hitting the floor as the plane crashed. My clothes did not catch fire. My hands were burnt very badly in the attempt to take off Netaji's clothes. Both my hands up to the wrist show marks of deep burning even



Major Kono's hands, which got burnt in the air crash





falling to the ground, would sustain damage to its structure. So, on examining the probabilities and weight of evidence, a major breakage in the rear part of the fuselage may be accepted. There might have been breakages and splits elsewhere also. But from a study of the photographs of the wreckage (Annexure II) it does not appear that the broken parts got separated nor is any support lent to the statement of Lt. Col. Nonogaki that the two split parts went in different directions on the ground.

13. What happened to the persons inside the aeroplane? The crash affected different persons differently. Of the seven persons in the plane who ultimately survived, the Committee has examined in person five of them, and read the statement recorded by a sixth, Lt. Col. T. Sakai. Lt. Col. Nonogaki who was in the turret was the luckiest. As the plane crashed, he was thrown out to the ground almost unhurt. He got up and ran away from the burning plane, and took shelter behind a pile of stones, against which the wrecked plane ultimately came to a halt. Lt. Col. Sakai, Major Takahashi and Captain Arai became senseless the moment the plane crashed, but found themselves soon after on the ground, and moved away from the burning plane. Clearly, they had been thrown out. In the process, they received injuries and burns. Lt. Col. Sakai stated that he received bruises on his head and some other parts, and burns on his face and hands, but they were not serious. Major Takahashi's left ankle was sprained. Injuries of Captain Arai were more serious. The right side of his face, the upper side of both his hands and the front portion of his forearm got burnt. Marks of these burns were still visible when he appeared before the Committee 11 years later. Major Kono was clearly an alert and observant person. At the moment of crash, instead of being flustered, he had his wits about him, and noticed what others were doing. He says, "As the plane was falling to the ground, the petrol tank inside the plane fell down, and came between me and Mr. Bose. I looked backwards but could not see Mr. Bose because of this tank. I could see General Shidei after the plane crash. He had a cut injury at the back of his head. Major Takizawa was hit in the face and on forehead by the steering which he was operating. N.C.O. Ayoagi was hit in the chest which was bleeding, and he was leaning forward. There was another engineer between me and N.C.O. Ayoagi. I do not know what happened to him. During this time, the fire spread greatly and the heat became unbearable. I broke open the plastic cover on top of the plane and escaped through it. While escaping, the fire was so strong that I had to protect my eyes by covering them with my hands which, as a result, got burnt, and my face and legs were also burnt. As I was escaping from the plane, I got splashed by petrol which was coming out from a pipe which connected the petrol tank with the engine which had been brought



*Air crash at Taihoku*



Takizawa. After being adjusted, I satisfied myself that the condition of the engine was all right. Major Takizawa also agreed with me that there was nothing wrong with the engine." ✓

10. Thereafter, all the passengers, after having had their rest and lunch, took their seats again in the plane in the same order of seating as before, that is to say, with the crew in the nose of the plane, Major Kono sitting behind the pilot on the port side, behind them Netaji and Col. Habibur Rehman, on the star-board side. General Shidei, and in the rear portion the other Japanese officers. Although the engines had been tested, the take-off from Taihoku was not quite normal. The best account of the take-off has been given by Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto, who was a Ground Engineer, and who was watching the plane. The other passengers inside the bomber could not see very much, as there were very few openings. There is some difference between the witnesses as to the actual time of the taking-off, but most of them put the time between 2 and 2-30 in the afternoon. Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto says, "After everybody had taken seat in the plane, the plane taxied to one end of the runway. Having reached the point, the engines of the plane speeded up to the maximum speed, and then slowed down. This was a normal procedure which all Japanese planes followed to test the fitness of the engines. Having satisfied that the engines were correct, the plane was speeded and allowed to run down the runway. The length of the runway was 890 metres. In the case of heavy bombers, normally the tail gets lifted half-way down the runway but in this case, the tail was not lifted off the ground until it had run approximately 3/4ths down the runway. At that time I was standing at a point which was about 30 metres away from the air-strip. About 50 metres before the end of the runway, the plane took off and made a steep ascent." The plane had carried the distinguished leader of the Indian Independence Movement and his fellow-passengers, from Saigon to Tourane, and from Tourane to Formosa over the South China Sea in safety, and nobody had any idea that disaster would overtake the plane without warning and so soon after leaving Taihoku Airfield.

11. Hardly had the plane got airborne, when a loud explosion was heard, and the plane tilted to the left. Col. Habibur Rehman has said that it was a noise like a cannon shot. The propeller and the port engine fell out. Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto who was watching says, "Immediately on taking off, the plane tilted to its left side and I saw something fall down from the plane, which I later found was the propeller." Major K. Sakai who came to the scene sometime later says that he found the port engine buried in the ground. The Pilot Major Takizawa and the Co-pilot, Ayoagi made desperate attempts to save the situation but without success. The list could not be rectified within the short height that the

plane had gained. Witnesses inside the plane have given different estimates of the height, but most of them say that the maximum height gained was about 30 metres. Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto, who had the best view, has estimated the height between 30 to 40 metres. Mr. A. M. N. Sastri, an Aircraft Inspector of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Government of India, has said, in answer to a question, that considering that the aircraft left the ground 50 metres before the end of the runway and started climbing, the figure of 30 to 40 metres given by witness Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto appeared to him to be reasonable. The plane nose-dived, making a wailing noise. The passengers inside the plane had not even seat-belts and naturally lost their balance. The baggage came tumbling down. Col. Habibur Rehman has said that he was struck in the back by some of the packages. Captain Arai has graphically described his feelings by saying that the earth was rushing towards him. Major Kono had the presence of mind to try and switch off the ignition to prevent the plane from catching fire, but failed to do so as he could not keep his balance. He fell two or three times in the attempt. The plane crashed to the ground and immediately caught fire in the front portion. According to Mr. A. M. N. Sastri, it would take only 3 seconds to fall from a height of 50 metres. Some witnesses, like Lt. Col. Nonogaki, have stated that the plane crashed on the concrete runway; on the other extreme, Col. Habibur Rehman has said that the crash took place one or two miles outside the aerodrome. The most credible version is probably that of the Ground Engineer, Captain Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto, who says that the plane crashed about 100 metres beyond the concrete runway. His version is supported by Major Sakai who was in command of defence of Taihoku Aerodrome. He says that he saw the wreckage of the plane lying 20 to 30 metres from the end of the runway. One of the passengers, Major Takahashi, also says that the crash took place just outside the concrete runway, but within the boundary of the aerodrome.

12. As the plane came down on its nose, it crashed on its left side and caught fire in its front portion. It appears from the statement of witnesses that the plane also suffered severe damage, and broke into two. Captain Arai, Lt. Col. Nonogaki and Major Kono have stated that on crashing the plane broke into two. They have illustrated the point at which the plane broke into two by supplying sketches of the plane. Major Sakai who came to the scene immediately after the accident and saw the wreckage of the plane also supports this version. On the other hand, according to Col. Habibur Rehman, the plane split in the front portion, while Capt. Nakamura *alias* Yamamoto is positive that the plane was intact and the body was not broken. He, however, says that the fire was confined to the front part of the plane. It is likely that the plane, on



Shidei and Col. Habibur Rehman and the fact that the crew were in the nose and the other officers at the back. There are, however, some discrepancies as to the number of the crew; some say it was four, others say it was five. There is, however, an important difference regarding Major Kono. According to Col. Habibur Rehman and Captain Arai, Major Kono was in the rear, but Major Kono says that he sat ahead of Netaji and talked to him during the flight. Col. Nonogaki also confirms this position. In the first written statement, dated 24-8-1945, by Col. Habibur Rehman, which was handed over to the Committee by Mr. J. Murti, it was however stated that there was a Japanese officer sitting between the Pilot and Netaji. So it seems more or less certain that Major Kono was sitting in the front of the plane.

7. The plane took off quite well from Saigon Airfield in the afternoon of the 17th August. There is some difference about the exact time, but most witnesses say that the plane took off between 5 and 5-30 P.M. As there was delay in starting, the Pilot decided to halt for the night at Tourane on the Indo-China coast, instead of flying straight to Formosa. Tourane was reached safely in a couple of hours. There Netaji and the other officers spent the night at the largest hotel in the town. Although the witnesses examined by the Committee could not give the name of the hotel, there is reason to believe that the hotel in question was Hotel Morin which the Committee visited during their trip to the Far East. While taking off at Saigon, the plane had to run the entire length of the runway before it was airborne. This showed that it was overloaded. While the others rested at Tourane, the Chief Pilot, assisted by Major Kono, both Air Force Officers, were busy making the plane lighter. According to Major Kono, no fewer than 12 anti-aircraft machine-guns, and all the ammunition were taken down from the plane. Some surplus luggage was also discarded, and the total weight reduced by 600 kilos. Thereafter these officers attended to the maintenance of the plane and satisfied themselves that everything was correct.

8. An early start was made next morning (18th August) at about 5 A.M. when the sun was rising. The passengers and crew took their seats in the same order as before. The plane was to follow the route: Saigon—Tourane—Heito (Formosa)—Taihoku (Formosa)—Dairen (Manchuria)—Tokyo. According to Major Takahashi, the normal route for aeroplanes at that time was to proceed to Tokyo via Dairen (Manchuria). The plane was much lighter and the take-off was very normal. During the flight from Tourane to Heito, the weather was perfect and the engines worked smoothly. The plane was flying at an altitude of about 12,000 ft. and it was quite cold inside the plane. As the weather was favourable, it was decided to cover some more distance, pass over

Heito, and land at Taihoku which is the Japanese name for Taipeh, capital of Formosa. According to Major Kono, during the flight, information was received that the Russians had occupied Port Arthur. It was feared that they might be in Dairen before long, and it became all the more necessary to reach there as quickly as possible. The plane landed safely and smoothly at Taihoku Airfield sometime in the afternoon. The landing time has been stated by different witnesses to be between 11 A.M. and 2 P.M.

9. On landing, everybody got down from the plane and walked to a nearby tent, rested there, and had light lunch of sandwiches and bananas. The tent had been pitched for a Japanese prince who was expected to pass through Taihoku. The prince was carrying orders from the Emperor to various Army Commanders to surrender. As the plane had been flying high, Col. Habibur Rehman was feeling cold, and on landing, changed into warm serge uniform of bush-coat, breeches and top-boots. He asked Netaji, who said that he did not feel cold. All the same, Col. Habibur Rehman handed him a pull-over. It is not clear whether Netaji did put on the warm pullover or not. Different witnesses have given the time of halt at Taihoku Airfield from half an hour to two hours. During this time, the plane was re-fuelled. The engines of the plane were also tested and checked. This was done by the Chief Pilot Major Takizawa, helped by Major Kono and the ground staff of the aerodrome, headed by Captain Nakamura alias Yamamoto. As the state of the engine has an important bearing on the subsequent crash, it might be worthwhile to quote the relevant portions from the statements of Major Kono and Captain Nakamura alias Yamamoto. Major Kono says, "Mr. Takizawa tested it inside, and I tested it from outside. I noticed that the engine of the left side of the plane was not functioning properly. I therefore, went inside the plane and after examining the engine inside, I found it to be working all right. . . . An engineer also accompanies the plane. He was accompanying it on this occasion also. I do not remember his name. He also tested the engine and certified its air-worthiness." Captain Nakamura alias Yamamoto, who was the Ground Engineer in charge of maintenance at Taihoku Aerodrome says, "At about 1-20 P.M. Major Takizawa and Co-pilot Ayoagi got into the plane and tested it. I was standing just in front of the plane. When they started the engine, I found that one of them was defective. I raised my hand to indicate to him (Major Takizawa) that the engine of the left side was defective. On my signal indicating that the engine was defective, Major Takizawa leaned out to listen to me. I told him that the left engine was defective, and should be put right. Major Takizawa slowed down the engine and told me that it was a brand new engine which had been replaced at Saigon. After slowing down the engine, he adjusted it for about 5 minutes. The engine was tested twice by Major



them. The plane was already overloaded, and there were protests against loading it any more. In spite of this, the heavy treasure boxes were loaded into the plane. Among the Japanese passengers was a distinguished Military Officer, Lt. Gen. Shidei, lately Chief of the General Staff of the Burma Army, who was proceeding to Manchuria as Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army. General Shidei came out of the plane and greeted Netaji. Although there was an element of chance in Netaji's travelling by the same plane as General Shidei, it appears that Netaji fell in with the idea that he should go up to Dairen (Manchuria) with General Shidei. Mr. Negishi, at that time an Interpreter attached to Netaji's Headquarters, says, "General Shidei was supposed to be an expert on Russian affairs in the Japanese army, and was considered to be a key man for negotiations with Russia. It was suggested that Netaji should accompany him to Manchuria." It may be mentioned here that before he took up the job of Interpreter, he was working in the important firm of Mitubishi, and is now the head of that firm in India. Lt. Col. Nonogaki, an Air Staff Officer of the Japanese Army, says, "The plane was scheduled to carry General Shidei to Manchuria. Netaji agreed to go with him to Dairen in Manchuria. So there was no change in the schedule of the plane." The plane itself was a twin-engined heavy bomber of 97-2 (Sally) type, and belonged to the Third Air Force Army stationed at Singapore. There is divergence of opinion on whether it was a new or an old plane. According to Captain Arai and Major Kono, the plane was of the newest type. General Isoda goes so far as to say that it was a brand new one. But Lt. Col. Nonogaki has stated that it was an old plane. General Isayama says that the engine of the plane was worn out. It is unlikely that the plane was a brand new one. The Ground Engineer Captain Nakamura alias Yamamoto has stated that, while testing the engine at Taihoku, the Chief Pilot Major Takizawa had told him that the port engine had been replaced by a brand new one at Saigon. A brand new plane would not require the replacement of an engine.

5. Besides General Shidei, the plane was carrying five other Japanese military officers as passengers. These were:

Lt. Col. Tadeo Sakai, a Staff Officer of the Burma Army.

Lt. Col. Shiro Nonogaki, an Air Staff Officer.

Major Taro Kono, an Air Staff Officer.

Major Ihaho Takahashi, a Staff Officer.

Capt. Keikichi Arai, an Air Force Engineer.

Lt. Col. Sakai is now in Formosa on a special mission. The others are now civilians. Lt. Col. Nonogaki is now the Branch Manager at Osaka of the firm of Tokyo Kagyo Byoeiki Shokai Ltd. Major Kono has his printing business in Tokyo. Major Takahashi lives at Kanagawa city in Zushi prefecture. Captain Arai is a lecturer at

the Tokyo and Kieo Universities. The crew consisted of five or six persons:

Chief Pilot—Major Takizawa,

Co-pilot—W/O Ayoagi,

Navigator—Sergeant Okishta,

Radio-Operator—N.C.O. Tominaga,

and one or two engineers, whose names have not come out. Including Netaji and his Adjutant, Col. Habibur Rehman, the plane carried 13 or 14 persons in all. Netaji was in uniform wearing a khaki drill bush-shirt, trousers and shoes, with I.N.A. cap and badges. He bade good-bye to all those who had come to see him, and shook hands with them, telling them that they would meet him soon. After that, he boarded the plane through an entrance on the port side followed by Col. Habibur Rehman. That was the last time his faithful followers, whom he left behind, saw him.

6. At the instance of General Shidei, Lt. Col. Nonogaki made arrangements for the seating of the passengers. As there were no proper seats, passengers had to squat on the floor, Netaji being provided with a cushion. General Shidei, Netaji and Col. Habibur Rehman were given the best seats. General Shidei took the seat usually occupied by the Co-pilot. The crew were in the nose of the plane, while the other military passengers took their seats in the rear of the plane. Col. Habibur Rehman has given a detailed description of the seating arrangements, which is reproduced below, and has illustrated it by sketch:

"The number of occupants in the plane including the crew was 12 or 13. In the nose portion of the plane were probably a Co-pilot, a Radio Officer and Navigator. The seat of the Pilot was behind them on the port side, and opposite to him on the star-board side was sitting Lt. Gen. Shidei. Immediately behind the Pilot was sitting Netaji, and nobody opposite to him, as the space was restricted by the petrol tanks. I was sitting immediately behind Netaji. The Co-pilot's seat occupied by Lt. Gen. Shidei was offered to Netaji but he did not accept, as it was too small for him. In the turret was standing one officer of the Air Force, and in the rear portion probably 4 other officers of the Japanese Air Force or Army. I do not exactly remember their ranks, except the names of one Lt. Col. Nonogaki and of Capt. Arai whom I met later, after the crash, in the hospital."

The Committee has examined four of Col. Habibur Rehman's fellow-passengers, namely, Lt. Col. Nonogaki, Major Kono, Major Takahashi and Captain Arai. Regarding seating arrangements, the versions of the different witnesses tally to a great extent. They all say the same thing about the relative positions of Netaji, General



the plane. The two large suit-cases contained gold ornaments and other valuables—more will be heard of them later. The party travelled in two aeroplanes and arrived safely at Saigon. There is some variation in the time of arrival at Saigon as given by different witnesses. Shri Debnath Das says that they arrived at 8 A.M., whereas, according to Col. Habibur Rehman, the time of arrival was 10 A.M., which is also the time mentioned by Mr. S. A. Ayer. From the aerodrome, the party drove into the town, and took rest in two houses belonging to an Indian gentleman, Mr. Chotir Mal. Whereas in Bangkok, important witnesses were available, unfortunately at Saigon, most of the Indians, who were active in Netaji's time, were no longer there. One alleged eye-witness was an Indian darwan, Ramneo Gosai. He said that Netaji came to the bungalow, accompanied only by two Japanese officers and left hurriedly after having lunch. The statement of this witness may be ascribed to failing memory after eleven years. One Mr. Narain Das, then of the Indian Independence League, Saigon, and now of Tangier, has said that Ramneo told him the same story. Against his testimony, we have the evidence of the much more reliable persons who accompanied Netaji to Saigon. This witness also said that Messrs. Ayer and Chatterjee left that bungalow in Saigon only two days before Netaji's arrival, and that Netaji was enquiring about them. In point of fact, Mr. Ayer was actually accompanying Netaji.

3. At Saigon, however, the arrangements did not work according to expectation. No special plane was available to carry Netaji and his party. F.M. Terauchi's Headquarters had been informed beforehand by the Hikari Kikan of Netaji's pending arrival at Saigon. Col. Yano who was on the staff of the Southern Army has stated that F.M. Terauchi had decided that Netaji should reach Tokyo as soon as possible, but owing to difficulty in obtaining passages by aeroplane, Netaji alone should go. The Headquarters of Southern Army at that time was located at Dalat, a short distance from Saigon, and there were officers posted at Saigon to carry out the orders of the Headquarters. The actual arrangements for transport by air were being made by Lt. Col. Kojima, while Lt. Col. Tada, a Staff Officer from the Headquarters, Southern Army, who usually dealt with the Hikari Kikan, met Netaji's party which included General Isoda. Lt. Col. Tada informed General Isoda that only one seat was available for Netaji in a plane that was leaving Saigon very soon the same day. General Isoda was naturally annoyed, and proceeded at once to Dalat to speak to F.M. Terauchi. On arrival at Dalat Airport, General Isoda was informed by Col. Yano that it was no use seeing the Field Marshal, but he advised him to wait a little at the aerodrome. In point of fact, the Headquarters was in a state of confusion following the Japanese surrender three days earlier. Soon afterwards, General Numata, Chief of General Staff of the

Southern Army, rang up General Isoda and told him that he had brought the matter to the notice of the Field Marshal, and 2 or 3 seats besides that of Netaji would be available in a plane shortly. With this assurance General Isoda returned to Saigon, but there he was again met by Lt. Col. Tada, who gave him the disappointing information that the final decision was that only one seat besides Netaji's would be available. When the first proposal of only one seat was broached, Netaji turned it down flat. He insisted that the entire party of his officers and Advisers should go with him. There was a lot of discussion on this subject between Netaji and his Advisers on the one hand, and the Japanese officers on the other. His Advisers thought that Netaji should not go all by himself. According to Mr. Debnath Das, who was an Adviser in the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, the Japanese officers had said that Saigon was no longer safe on account of Allied and insurgent activities, and, therefore, Netaji should move on as quickly as possible. When the second offer of two seats was made, there were further discussions. During the course of these discussions, according to Col. Pritam Singh of the I.N.A., the Japanese gave out that as the Allied Forces had restricted the flights of their planes after surrender, they could not be sure whether aeroplanes would be available in the future, and advised Netaji to accept the two seats offered. In the end, Netaji reluctantly agreed to accept these two seats, but on condition that those who were left behind were provided with transport on the following day. General Isoda promised to do his best.

4. Netaji selected Col. Habibur Rehman to accompany him. His choice was apparently approved of by the rest of his party, as he was a Senior Staff Officer, and had been in close touch with Netaji for a long time. This has been mentioned by Col. Pritam Singh and Col. Gulzara Singh of the I.N.A. Netaji still did not give up hope of getting more seats in the plane. He told all members of his party to pack up their kit, and come with him to the aerodrome to try their luck. On arrival at Saigon Airport, however, the party was disappointed, as only two seats were available. Netaji's baggage was unloaded from his car. The Chief Pilot said that the baggage was too heavy, and could not be put on the plane, as it was already overloaded. Consequently, Netaji himself discarded a part of his baggage containing books, clothes, etc. The party came to the aerodrome in two cars. Netaji came in the first car. While all these arguments and arrangements were being made, the plane was waiting at the aerodrome. There were a number of Japanese officers who were to go in the same plane. The Japanese were very impatient to start, but this was delayed for about half an hour or so for the arrival of the second car. This car carried two leather suit cases containing jewellery, etc., and Netaji refused to move without



desire to go to Russia. I promised to give all the help that I could give to Netaji. . . . Eventually, the plan that was finally settled was that Netaji would first go to Tokyo, thank the Japanese Government for all the assistance that they had given him . . . and then proceed to Russia *via* Manchuria."

7. There was no time then to contact Russian authorities or to make out detailed plans ahead. Russia was at war with Japan, and the Russian armies were advancing into Manchuria. Even if Netaji reached Manchuria, what would happen to him and the few trusted lieutenants, whom he wanted to take with him, was uncertain. All that he could hope was that they would be taken prisoners first, establish their *bona fides* as fighters for India's freedom, and later on secure Russian assistance for their objective. The details were uncertain; the purpose was fixed. Netaji himself described his last journey as "an adventure into the unknown". He chose Col. Habibur Rehman, Major Abid Hasan, Col. Gulzara Singh and Col. Pritam Singh, Mr. Debnath Das and Mr. S. A. Ayer to accompany him, but they were not told where he was going. They all knew vaguely that they were going to Manchuria. General Bhonsle, Chief of the General Staff, who was left behind by Netaji in charge of the I.N.A., says, "On the eve of his departure, I enquired from Netaji whether he had been able to decide where he would make for finally, after his discussions with the Japanese Government, and his reply was that he was hoping to go to Russia, but that he would talk over the matter further with the Japanese Government." At Saigon, almost by chance, Netaji was met by Lt. General Shidei, who was proceeding as Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. General Shidei was a leading Japanese expert on matters Russian. According to Mr. Negishi, who was with the party up to Saigon, it was suggested that Netaji should accompany General Shidei to Manchuria, and he apparently fell in with the suggestion. The plane was proceeding to Tokyo by the following route: Saigon—Heito—Taihoku (Formosa)—Dairen (Manchuria)—Tokyo. A little element of doubt remained whether Netaji would proceed by the same plane to Tokyo or break the journey at Dairen. Japan had surrendered. There was profound depression, and the elaborate machinery of Government was running down. Netaji was flying two days after surrender for an uncertain destination. It was indeed a leap in the dark. From this leap he did not return.

## CHAPTER II

## AIR CRASH AT TAIHOKU (FORMOSA)

IN pursuance of his plan, Netaji was moving out of South-East Asia. He left Singapore on the morning of 16th August 1945, with Col. Habibur Rehman, Col. Pritam Singh, Mr. S. A. Ayer and Mr. Negishi, the Japanese Interpreter, and arrived at Bangkok, the same afternoon. It was arranged that Messrs. Thivy, Chatterjee and Raghavan would follow him. At Bangkok he held meetings with his Ministers, Military Advisers, leading members of the Indian Independence League, and made last-minute dispositions. General Bhonsle was to be left in command of the Indian National Army, and a Committee consisting of Sardar Ishar Singh, Pandit Raghunath Sharma and Shri Permanand was to look after the affairs of the League at Bangkok. Large donations were made to the Chulalongkorn Hospital and University, the Indian Association, Bangkok, and the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge, and all officers and men were sanctioned two or three months' pay. A small number of Civil and Military Advisers and officers were selected by Netaji to accompany him. These were:

Col. Habibur Rehman,  
Major Abid Hasan,  
Col. Pritam Singh,  
Col. Gulzara Singh,  
Mr. Debnath Das, and  
Mr. S. A. Ayer.

The movement plan was as usual discussed with General Isoda, Chief of the Japanese Liaison Mission (Hikari Kikan). The latter arranged for two aeroplanes to take the party to Saigon. Saigon was the Headquarters of the Southern Army commanded by Field Marshal Count Terauchi, who was in overall command of all Japanese forces in South-East Asia. Arrangements for transport beyond Saigon were to be made by the Headquarters of that Command.

2. On the morning of the 17th August (slightly different times are given by different witnesses) Netaji and his party arrived at Bangkok Aerodrome. They were seen off by a large number of officers and leaders of the Indian National Army and Indian Independence League. General Isoda of the Hikari Kikan, Mr. Hachiya, the Japanese Envoy to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, and Mr. Negishi (Interpreter) also accompanied Netaji up to Saigon. In addition to Netaji's personal kit packed in three or four suit-cases, two large suit-cases about 36" long were also put on board



that time British forces had broken through at Meiktila and Rangoon was lost. Netaji stayed at Rangoon as long as possible, and moved out only at the last moment on the 24th April 1945. He retreated to Bangkok, arriving there on the 14th of May. The chapter of retreat which began at Imphal in June 1944 ended at Bangkok in May 1945. This was the second chapter of the I.N.A. story. The third chapter was brief. From Netaji's arrival in Bangkok on the 14th May, to his flight from Saigon on the 17th August, there were barely three months. To go back to the approved plan, before it could be given effect to, Netaji moved to Singapore, especially to broadcast a series of talks to India, not to accept the terms offered by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell. Even at that time, Netaji and his Advisers calculated that there would be at least six months' interval between the collapse of Germany, and the eventual surrender of Japan. It was hoped that by that time, the Headquarters would be shifted somewhere farther east, and some contact made with the Russians. But Russia declared war on Japan on August 9th and atom bombs were dropped by Americans on the Japanese mainland. All calculations were thus upset and Japan surrendered on the 15th August 1945.

5. Mr. S. A. Ayer in Chapter V of his book *Unto Him Witness* has vividly described the rush and turmoil of those days. Netaji was on a visit to Seramban in Malaya. On the 12th of August, Dr. Lakshmayya and Mr. Ganapathy of the Indian Independence League Headquarters rushed up in a car, and gave him the shattering news that Japan had surrendered. Netaji received this news in a calm and even carefree manner, typical of him. To quote Mr. Ayer's words, "He first broke into a smile, and almost his first words were: 'So that is that. Now, what next?' It was the soldier speaking. He was already thinking of the next move and the next battle. He was not going to be beaten. Japan's surrender was, not India's surrender." Netaji returned to Singapore immediately and held a non-stop series of conferences, night and day, with his Advisers and officers. Against their advice, Netaji was determined to remain behind and surrender at Singapore with his troops. But on the 14th evening they were joined by Mr. A. N. Sarkar, a Member of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, who arrived from Bangkok with words from General Isoda, Chief of the Hikari Kikan and Mr. Hachiya, Japanese Minister to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Mr. Sarkar told Netaji that Messrs. Isoda and Hachiya were anxious to help him to get away from Malaya and Thailand to farther east, so that he would not fall into the hands of the Anglo-Americans. At last Netaji was persuaded not to remain behind at Singapore, and to proceed east. The final decision was, to quote Mr. Ayer, "Out of Malaya definitely, to some Russian territory certainly, to Russia itself, if possible." There

were reasons why Netaji should go to Tokyo at that time. There was the pressing question whether the I.N.A. should surrender as part of the Japanese forces, or as a separate army. Netaji and his Advisers were anxious that there should be an independent surrender, as the I.N.A. represented an independent State. The Japanese Commander in Singapore could not give an answer as he had no instructions. Probably, the authorities in Tokyo only could give a definite answer. Mr. N. Kitazawa, a member of the House of Representatives, Japan, was examined by the Committee. During the war, he was a Counsellor attached to the Japanese Embassy in Rangoon. He has stated that a week before the surrender, the Japanese Government communicated to all Heads of States who were allied with them that they would be prepared to give them shelter in Japan. Accordingly, President Laurel of Philippines, Dr. Ba Maw of Burma, and Mr. Chenkun Pao, Head of the Chinese Government in Nanking, took refuge in Japan. So far as Mr. Kitazawa knew, this offer was communicated to Netaji by Mr. Hachiya. It is not certain whether Netaji accepted the offer because Netaji's concern throughout had been the continuance of his struggle, without any thought of personal safety. Mr. Kunizuka of the Hikari Kikan, who was attached to Netaji throughout the period, has stated that Netaji was not in favour of taking shelter in Japan, as Japan was a small country, and the Occupation Forces would be there soon. Perhaps, Netaji accepted it only as a gesture of courtesy.

6. On the 16th August Netaji came to Bangkok. Mr. Hachiya, the Japanese Minister to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, met him and delivered to him a message which conveyed the decision of the Japanese Government to surrender. It thanked Netaji for the co-operation extended to them in the prosecution of war. The message also contained an offer from the Government of Japan to be of any assistance to him. Mr. Hachiya says that Netaji told him that the Government of Japan having surrendered unconditionally, they would not be in a position to afford any protection to him. He was, therefore, more inclined to contact Russia. About this, however, the local authorities at Bangkok could not give much help. All they could do was to carry him to Saigon, and discuss and take orders from Field Marshal Count Terauchi, who was the Japanese Supreme Commander in South-East Asia. Col. Yano, Staff Officer of that Command, knew that Netaji was coming, and that he wished to go to Russia. He has said that Field Marshal Terauchi could not give any decision himself, but wished that Netaji should proceed to Tokyo and discuss the matter with the Government of Japan. So, there were a number of reasons for Netaji to go to Tokyo, although his ultimate goal was Russia via Manchuria. General Isoda, who, as the head of the Hikari Kikan, was consulted by Netaji on his return to Bangkok, says that Netaji "expressed a



but great things were attempted, and partly achieved, during this short period. Under the stress of war, the Indian Independence Movement in South-East Asia had some of the qualities of an epic. Its full story is yet to be written. The story can be divided into several chapters. The first chapter, the spring of hope, ended with the incursion into the fringes of India and the failure to take Imphal. That was in April 1944. There was lack of air-cover, artillery and food. Then the monsoons set in. The forward elements of the Indian National Army, along with the Japanese Army, fell back across the Chindwin in Upper Burma. The rivers were in flood and sick men were carried on the backs of their comrades. Many have heard of the historic march of the Communist Fourth Route Army across China to Yen-an, but few know the story of the heroic retreat of the I.N.A. across Burma. Netaji, however, was not daunted by failure, and continued to work hard at reorganising the I.N.A. Addressing a public meeting at Bangkok at this time, he said, "March to Delhi still continues to be our battle-cry. We may not march to Delhi via Imphal, but it must be borne in mind that, like Rome, there are many roads leading to Delhi."

3. There were changes in the Government of Japan and General Tojo was replaced by General Koiso. In October 1944 Netaji visited Japan for the third and last time to meet the Members of the new Government of Japan and discuss important matters with them. By that time there had been further reverses for the Axis powers in Europe, and for the Japanese in Asia. The British forces had advanced far into Burma, and were threatening Mandalay. The Americans were active in the Pacific. The chances of a Japanese victory seemed more and more remote. From the very outset, Netaji had declared that his battle was for the independence of India, and whatever happened to his Allies, Germans or Japanese, his war would continue till the liberation of India was achieved. From the time of his last visit to Japan Netaji looked out for another vantage-point from which to fight the British. He saw that the only country which could afford any assistance was Russia. He foresaw, and discussed with his Advisers, Members of his Government, and officers, that it would not be long before Russia fell out with the Anglo-Americans, and that the wartime alliance between the two was a temporary phase. He went even to the extent of predicting that there would be a third world-war in ten years' time between Russia on the one hand, and the Anglo-Americans on the other. Netaji felt that for him it would be good policy to take shelter in Russia, from where he could come out in time to continue his war of liberation against the British. On his way back from Tokyo in October 1944, Netaji met at Shanghai Mr. Anand Mohan Sahay who had long been in Japan. He asked Mr. Sahay to go to Tokyo and try to establish contact with the Soviet Ambassador there, Mr. Jacob Malik. Mr. Sahay, who is at

present our Consul General in Hanoi, was examined at Saigon. He said that he sounded several important personalities, including the Foreign Minister, Mr. Shigemitsu, and the Home Minister, Mr. Uzawa, but they advised him that it would be useless to contact the Soviet Ambassador. So, Mr. Sahay returned to Singapore and told Netaji the result of his mission. The quest, however, was not given up. The question of a "second front" became urgent in the middle of 1945, after the retreat from Rangoon and the collapse of Germany. An official reference was made to the Government of Japan by Netaji to contact the Russian authorities on his behalf. Mr. Debnath Das has kindly supplied the Committee with a copy of the Japanese Government's reply which was received sometime in June 1945. After thanking Netaji for his continuing co-operation with Japan, it says, "Nippon Government deems it almost without hope of success to get directly in touch with the Soviet Government on behalf of Your Excellency, and it has no intention of doing so." Mr. Debnath Das has stated that about this time several alternative plans were considered. The first was to go to India and prepare for an armed revolution inside the country: Alternative, to go to Yen-an (Communist China): And thirdly, to try and contact the Russians through the Japanese. The third alternative seemed to have found favour with Netaji. A direct approach to Russia seemed difficult; Manchuria, which was next door, and held by the Japanese forces, was increasingly considered as the best place to move to. But in case all these failed, Netaji advised Mr. Debnath Das to organise cells in South-East Asia which could be used for going underground.

4. About the same time, the movement of the Headquarters of the Indian National Army, and the Indian Independence League to China, was also seriously considered. General Isoda, who was the head of the Japanese Liaison Mission (Hikari Kikan), and through whom all correspondence with Japan passed, has given valuable information on this point. He has said that the first proposal was that the headquarters should be moved to Shanghai, but this did not materialise. There is reason to believe that the Japanese Southern Army Command felt that if Netaji moved out of South-East Asia, it would be difficult to control the I.N.A. The second alternative was that the Headquarters should be moved to Saigon, with branches at Shanghai and Peking, or some other city in North China. The reason for establishing a branch in North China was that Netaji would be nearer Russian territory, and be in a better position to contact the Soviet authorities. The Government of Japan and the Imperial General Headquarters were at first reluctant to accept this scheme, but they agreed when General Isoda explained to them that Netaji did not intend to cut off connection with Japan, but to have an alternative connection with Russia. This plan was apparently approved by the Government of Japan in the middle of May. By



recovered. To bring out the above picture, it was decided that the Report should deal with the following points:

- (1) Last plans of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
- (2) Air crash at Taihoku (Formosa)
- (3) Death of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
- (4) Cremation of Netaji's body
- (5) Netaji's ashes
- (6) Treasure

Each point is dealt with in a self-contained chapter. The conclusions of the Chairman and the other member who has signed the Report are also given in each chapter. In a final chapter (7), a suggestion has been made that Netaji's ashes should be brought to India with due honour. The Report is in two parts:

Part A — Report (with three annexures):

Annexure I—Copies of relevant papers.

Annexure II—Photographs.

Annexure III—Sketches and plans.

Part B — Evidence of witnesses (with photographs of some witnesses).

7. A large number of witnesses were examined in Japan. Tracing the witnesses and securing their attendance would not have been possible without the ever-ready help and co-operation of the Japanese Foreign Office (Gaimusho). H.E. Mr. Shigemitsu, Foreign Minister of Japan, who had held the same position in Netaji's time, extended to the Committee every courtesy and consideration. The Committee wishes to thank the Government of Japan, Mr. Shigemitsu, and the staff of the Japanese Foreign Office, most sincerely for their help and kindness. The Indian Embassy in Tokyo also were very helpful. In particular, the Committee has pleasure in recording appreciation of the services of Mr. J. Rehman who was attached to the Committee throughout their stay in Japan. Assistance was also received from the Indian Missions at Bangkok and Saigon. The Committee wishes to thank the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs, and the Intelligence Bureau of the Home Ministry for lending secret Intelligence Reports. Shri R. Dayal, who was attached to the Chairman of the Committee as P.A., worked very hard from the very beginning to the end, and gave satisfaction all round. And finally, the Committee wishes to thank, with all sincerity, the Government of India, for making the arrangements for the work of the Committee, at home and abroad, and the opportunity given to them to make a first-hand study of an important chapter in the history of our times.

## CHAPTER I

### LAST PLANS OF NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

The terms of reference of the Committee are:

*"To enquire into and to report to the Government of India on the circumstances concerning the departure of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose from Bangkok about the 16th August 1945, his alleged death as a result of an aircraft accident, and subsequent developments connected therewith."*

2. We have been asked to write the last page which had up to now remained blank; but to do so, it is necessary to know a little of the background of the first and intermediate pages. Early in 1942, the Japanese armies overran large parts of South-East Asia, which had been under colonial domination by European powers, and in so doing, they released a great impetus to nationalism. There were three million Indians in South-East Asia who took a leading part in this movement. They formed the Indian Independence League under Mr. Rash Behari Bose. Singapore fell on 15th February 1942, and the large British Indian Army stationed there surrendered. Out of this was formed the first Indian National Army under General Mohan Singh. This Movement, however, was without a real leader of sufficient political stature. From the very start, the movement was waiting for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who was then in Europe, having escaped from detention in India in 1941. After a long and perilous journey by submarine, Netaji arrived in South-East Asia, and took charge of the Indian Independence Movement on the 4th of July 1943. Soon after, he assumed supreme command of the Indian National Army. Addressing a review of the Indian National Army at Singapore on 5th July, he first uttered his famous battle-cry, "CHALO DELHI!" "DELHI CHALO!" On the 21st October 1943, the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was formed. There was great enthusiasm and men and money poured in. The Japanese Army had overrun Burma and was poised for the invasion of India through Assam. Troops of the Indian National Army were sent to the front, and they took a gallant part in the fighting around Imphal and Kohima. Netaji toured all over East Asia, and visited Japan more than once. Although belonging to a subject nation, and dependent on Japan for keeping his army in the field, he left an indelible impression of his personality on all those who came in contact with him. Even today, his name is a household word in South-East Asia and Japan. Between his arrival in Singapore in July 1943, and his departure from Bangkok in August 1945, barely two years passed,



Delhi and Calcutta (India). A number of persons who were known to have been associated with Netaji in the last stages, were requested to appear before the Committee—in India directly, and abroad with the help of Indian Missions and Foreign Offices of the Governments of those countries. In addition, press notes were issued asking people who had information to give, to make it available to the Committee. The response to the press notes was encouraging. It may be mentioned here that throughout the period of its work, a large number of news items appeared in Indian and Japanese papers concerning the Committee's work. This was a measure of interest people continued to take in Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. In India the Committee examined five of the six persons who accompanied Netaji on his last flight from Bangkok including Mr. S. A. Ayer, Mr. Debnath Das and Col. Habibur Rehman. Col. Rehman came all the way from Pakistan to appear before the Committee. The Committee also examined General J. K. Bhonsle, Chief of the General Staff of the I.N.A. The Commission examined not only those who had information to give, but those who had theories to propound. Everybody was given a chance. The first witness called by the Committee was Mr. M. Thevar, M.L.A. (Madras), who had made several statements that he had been in contact with Netaji recently. Unfortunately, Mr. Thevar refused to share his secret with the members of the Committee. The members of the Committee left India on the 26th of April, and the first halt was at Bangkok. Bangkok was one of the most important centres of the Indian Independence Movement, and was the headquarters of Netaji's Government when he retreated from Burma. There the witnesses examined included Sardar Ishar Singh and Pandit Raghunath Sharma, who were leading members of the Indian Independence League in Netaji's time. Saigon was also one of the centres of the Movement, and Netaji's plane took off from there. At Saigon the witnesses examined included Mr. Anand Mohan Sahay, Secretary-General to the Azad Hind Government, and now Indian Consul General, Hanoi. From Saigon, the members of the Committee flew out to have a look at Tourane on the Viet Nam coast, from where Netaji's plane took off on its fateful journey on the morning of the 18th August 1945.

3. The members of the Committee reached Tokyo (Japan) on the 5th of May and spent a month there. They found that Netaji's name was still a household word in Japan, and a great deal of interest was taken about him both by the public and the press. In addition to those witnesses who were called through the Japanese Foreign Office, a large number of Japanese witnesses volunteered and gave evidence, in response to newspaper notices. To mention one case, Mr. J. Nakamura, who was an Interpreter, and was present at Netaji's death-bed, although 70 years of age, came on his

own all the way from Kyushu, about 1,200 kilometres from Tokyo. The members of the Committee were much struck by the interest displayed by the Japanese public in their enquiry, and by the patience and courtesy with which Japanese witnesses stood long examination through an interpreter. They came from different walks of life. There were ex-soldiers and ex-Generals, businessmen and truck-drivers. The Committee was fortunate in being able to examine four of the six Japanese survivors of the plane crash, as well as two doctors who attended Netaji during his last hours.

4. The members of the Committee were anxious to visit Formosa which was the actual scene of occurrence of the plane crash, Netaji's death, and his cremation. There were difficulties in doing so, as there were no diplomatic relations between the Government of India and the authorities in Formosa. A reference was made to the Government of India, who informed the Committee that they did not consider a visit to Formosa feasible. So the attempt had to be given up.

5. After examining the witnesses, the Committee was engaged in studying the evidence recorded by them, as well as obtaining and reading all the papers concerning the last phase of Netaji, much of which was in the form of secret Intelligence Reports recorded immediately after the war. Books dealing with Netaji or the I.N.A. were also studied. Thereafter, the members of the Committee discussed the whole matter among themselves, and a list of points which was agreed upon by all the three members, including Shri Suresh Chandra Bose, was drawn up on the 30th June 1956. This paper was signed by all the three members, a copy of which will be found in Annexure I. All the members agreed then that there had been an air crash at Taihoku in Formosa, in which Netaji met his death; that he was cremated there, and the ashes now lying at the Renkoji temple in Tokyo are in all probability his ashes. Since then, for reasons of his own, Shri Bose has taken a different view and has not signed the report.

6. After going carefully through the evidence and relevant papers, the picture that emerged was like this:

In the last stages when Japan's defeat seemed inevitable, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was preparing to shift his struggle from South-East Asia to Russia via Manchuria. He left Bangkok on the 16th, and Saigon on the 17th August 1945, in an aeroplane bound for Manchuria. That plane crashed in flames at Taihoku in Formosa on the 18th August. As a result of serious burns sustained, Netaji died in a Taihoku hospital on the same night. His body was cremated at Taihoku. His ashes were flown to Tokyo early in September and deposited at Renkoji temple. Netaji carried some treasure with him, details of which cannot be ascertained. A small part of this treasure was salvaged, and subsequently





## INTRODUCTION

DURING his lifetime, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had captured the imagination of the Indian public by his daring exploits, such as his escape from India to Germany, his voyage to the Far East in a submarine, and his fight with the British in Burma, with his Indian National Army. The limelight was followed by a sudden black-out in August 1945. The information about the last stages of his life came out in bits and pieces, but not as a coherent whole. Naturally, the public desired that all the facts should be enquired into, and made known. This desire was voiced in Parliament from time to time. In response to this, the Prime Minister, on the 3rd December 1955, announced in Parliament that an Official Committee would be appointed to go into the matter. Accordingly, the Government of India appointed a Committee as per Notification No. F. 30(26)FEA/55, dated the 5th April 1956, consisting of the following:

Shri Shah Nawaz Khan, M.P. (Major General, I.N.A.), Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Railway.

Shri Suresh Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Shri S. N. Maitra, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Shri Maitra was a nominee of the Government of West Bengal. The terms of reference of the Committee were:

*"To enquire into and to report to the Government of India on the circumstances concerning the departure of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose from Bangkok about the 16th August 1945, his alleged death as a result of an aircraft accident, and subsequent developments connected therewith."*

2. The Committee began its work early in April and finished its labour by the end of July. The principal line followed by the Committee was to examine as witnesses all persons in India and Far East who had useful information on the last phase of Netaji's activities. They also studied reports of secret enquiries concerning Netaji, conducted by Civil and Military Intelligence soon after the war. Over and above official documents, the members of the Committee also studied books and articles concerning Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. In all, the Committee examined 67 witnesses. A complete list of witnesses will be found in Annexure I. Of these, 32 witnesses were examined at Tokyo (Japan), 4 at Bangkok (Thailand), and 3 at Saigon (Viet Nam), and the balance of 28 at

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